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AUTHOR Foucar-Szocki, Diane; Erno, Susan; Dilley, Sarah; Grant, Suzanne Poore; Hildebrandt, Nancy; Leonard, Mimi Stout; Smith, Greg

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ABSTRACT

A study examined the extent to which Virginia Professional Development System (VPDS) components met practitioner needs and the degree to which they constituted an inquiry-based professional development system. Interviews with over 50 Virginia Institute for Lifelong Learning (VAILL) participants focused on their use of the Centers for Professional Development, Literacy Resource Center, PROGRESS Newsletter, Adult Educator's Research Network, Learning Plans, and VAILLs. These practitioners pursued their learning inside and outside of VPDS and looked to local and regional personnel and resources as their first source for information and learning and to VAILLs for practical applications, information, and the opportunity to learn from colleagues. PROGRESS was widely received, read, and valued. Most found the Resource Center and the professional development centers responsive to their needs. The Research Network was the least-known component. Knowledge of VPDS components reflected the practitioners' role in adult education, location in the state, and years of service. Many practitioners saw learning plans as a time-consuming, independent, self-directed enterprise and focused on the required paperwork. Practitioners wanted to learn with others, know the impact of their learning on practice, and have paid time to engage in learning. Recommendations were related to access and support, community, and voice. (Appendixes contain the interview protocol and 37 references.) (YLB)

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WE ARE NOW IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT:

A Practitioner Evaluation of the Virginia Adult Education Professional Development System

BY

**Diane Foucar-Szocki, Ed.D.,
Susan Erno, Sarah Dilley, Suzanne Poore Grant,
Nancy Hildebrandt, Mimi Stout Leonard, and Greg Smith**

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Adult and Continuing Education**

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For further information, contact:

Susan Erno, Project Director
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902
(804) 972-4073
e mail: erno@esinet.net

Diane Foucar-Szocki, Lead Investigator
Associate Professor
Adult Education/Human Resources Dev.
319 Roop Hall
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
(540) 433-7484
e mail: foucardl@jmu.edu

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Team members, September 1997:

Diane Foucar-Szocki, Ed.D.
Susan Erno
Sarah Dilley
Suzanne Poore Grant
Nancy Hildebrandt
Mimi Stout Leonard
Greg Smith

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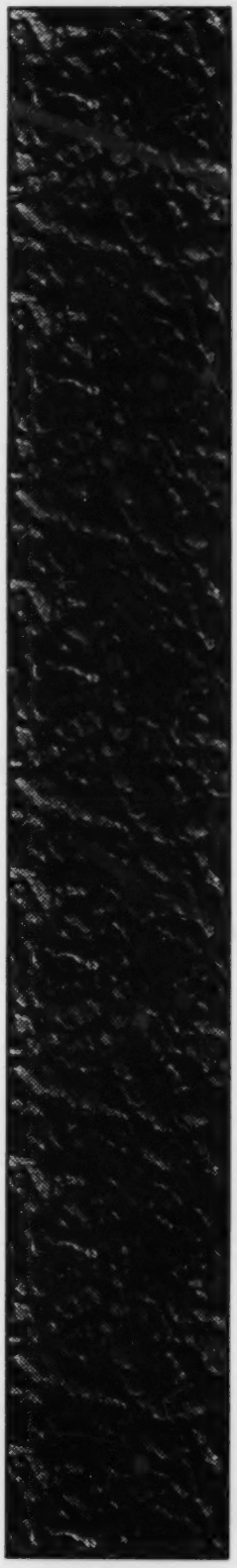
Chapter I: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This report is the third in a series of professional development focused studies conducted in Virginia throughout the 1990's. These studies began in July 1991 with a statewide evaluation of staff development conducted by Hanna Fingeret and Suzanne Cockley resulting in *Teachers Learning* (1992). *Teachers Learning* was the catalyst for convening a practitioner team of thirty Virginia adult educators to further conceptualize an implementation plan for Virginia staff development. In 1993, the team's work was reported by Cassie Drennon in *Inquiry and Action*, subsequently revised in 1994, to include an implementation guide for use by state, regional and local level personnel in their inquiry-based staff development efforts. In this, the third study in the series, we explore the extent to which the current professional development mechanisms in Virginia – a centralized resource center, the Centers for Professional Development, the three annual conferences (VAILLs), a newsletter (PROGRESS), and the Adult Educator's Research Network - are meeting practitioner needs and are inquiry-based. It is our hope that this work provides some sense of direction for future development of the ever-evolving Virginia professional development system.

In this first chapter of our final report, we revisit the prior reports, articulating the tenets of traditional staff development, the guiding principles of inquiry-based professional development, and why inquiry-based professional development emerged as a worthy approach for Virginia adult educators. Further, we examine the merits and inherent challenges of implementing inquiry-based professional development. In the next chapter, we describe our methods, including the setting for



the study, the practitioner research team, data collection, analysis, challenges and limitations. In the third chapter, we describe our findings, and in the fourth chapter, we present conclusions and offer recommendations for furthering the evolution of Virginia's Adult Basic Education professional development system.

It is important to note that throughout this report we use the term "practitioner." Practitioner is defined in *Inquiry and Action* (1994) to be "not only ABE and ESL teachers, but [also] classroom aides, volunteer tutors, GED examiners, program administrators, specialists and planners."(p. ii) This is the definition we employ as well.

The Professional Development of Adult Educators

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, many studies were conducted on staff development in adult education (Crew, 1991; Fingeret and Cockley, 1992: Foster, 1990; Kutner, 1992; National ABE Staff Development Consortium, 1987; Pelavin Associates, 1994; Sherman, 1991; Tibbetts, 1991). These studies revealed many barriers to effective staff development including the part time nature of the profession, a lack of mobility in the profession, a general lack of professionalization in the field, and the existence of few incentives for practitioners to engage in staff development. In addition, it was found that adult literacy, as a field, was committing few resources to professional development. Practitioners had few opportunities for networking and were rarely involved in the planning of their learning. Most staff development offerings were disconnected, decontextualized "one-shot" workshops or conferences where the process was largely one of remediation with experts filling the perceived gaps of deficient learners (Drennon, 1994;

Pelavin and Associates, 1992). Finally, these studies found evaluation of staff development to be sparse, often conducted as an afterthought.

These same researchers also focused on what adult literacy staff development needed in order to be more successful. Suggestions included providing resources and incentives for participation; having teachers involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their own learning; valuing practitioners for their experience and knowledge; providing networking opportunities and providing opportunities for choice. Some also suggested that staff development focus not just on improvement of the individual but also aim for total program improvement. Some suggested that staff development would benefit from more systematic decision-making, decentralization and a stronger basis in theory related to teaching and learning. Finally, suggestions called for more opportunities for reflection, inquiry, feedback and follow-up within staff development systems that provided for continucus, on-going learning rather than discrete, episodic, decontextualized learning.

Fingeret and Cockley (1992) in examining the Virginia staff development system also reported some of the previously cited concerns and recommended some of the same solutions. Finding that Virginia adult educators engage in staff development within the context of their own learning, they suggested a practitioner-centered system more congruent with learning as Virginia practitioners reported in their own experience. They proposed that Virginia embrace an inquiry-based approach to staff development.

Why an Inquiry-Based System?

Traditional approaches to staff development call for altering people's practice and beliefs through the transmission of expert knowledge to largely passive recipients with prescribed, decontextualized, pre-determined skills and knowledge presented as replicable from one situation to another. In this approach, practitioners engage in learning as individuals focused only on their own improvement with little systematic link to the program or fellow practitioners. The findings in *Teachers Learning* (1992) and other studies of professional development in both the adult literacy system and the larger K-12 system suggest that gaps exist between practitioner experience, effective learning, and the views espoused in these long held traditional approaches to professional development.

Recognizing that shifting emphasis required a change in philosophy, Cockley and Fingeret (1992) recommended a set of values and beliefs that changed the stance of practitioners to knowledge and to one another. They proposed a system where:

- Teachers' knowledge is valued.
- Teachers are helped to use what they know to continue learning.
- Activities, attitudes, structures and values support building a community of teachers as well as a community of teachers and learners.
- There is a focus on program improvement as well as individual change. This means that the inter-relatedness of effective management techniques, student retention, student achievement, improved status for adult education, and staff

development is stressed throughout all aspects of adult education, including the planning of staff development.

- Staff development is viewed as a continuing process involving administrators as well as teachers. (p. 77)

An inquiry-based system is grounded in these principles and is consistent with current research in literacy education. (Stein, 1995, 1997) These features are consistent with Virginia's responsive, learner-centered adult basic education system. Moving in this direction, both practitioner learning and student learning would be grounded in consistent, shared philosophies and practices.

What is Inquiry-Based Professional Development?

Lytle, Belzer and Reumann (1993) state that inquiry is a questioning stance adopted by teachers, tutors and administrators toward their work. Lytle (1996) elaborates:

> Inquiry is not a staff development technique or method. It is a radically different way for practitioners to position themselves as generators, not merely consumers, of significant knowledge for improving practice. They position themselves as learners from what they do everyday. A wide range of strategies to initiate and support inquiry are possible, but all involve processes of articulating questions, interacting with colleagues and the literature, closely observing and documenting practice, and possessing an intention to make problematic the social, cultural, cognitive and political arrangements that structure literacy teaching and learning in particular contexts and communities. The systematic and intentional process of learning from one's own practice comes to be regarded as integral to teaching and administering programs and as critical for making decisions about practice over time. (Lytle, 1996, p.86).

In inquiry, teachers, tutors and administrators are learners in their everyday settings. Their real-world experiences are the

basis for their learning and knowledge generation. Inquiry is grounded in the knowledge and questions held by practitioners.

The process undertaken by Virginia practitioners that resulted in *Inquiry and Action* (1994) incorporates these features of inquiry. Practitioners came together in a community to pursue questions related to practice and their own learning. Working together they engaged with one another, the literature and the field. Their resulting report, *Inquiry and Action* (1994) was derived from intentional, systematic, collective efforts that created new knowledge and has made problematic many of the elements of learning and practice to be addressed by implementation of their proposed comprehensive professional development system. As testament to its value, their work is foundational to this report and our concept of professional development in Virginia. Drawing exclusively from *Inquiry and Action* (1994), we compiled the following seven ideals for guiding Virginia's professional development system:

Access and Support

- Practitioners are at the center of staff development and have the freedom to choose what and how to learn from a variety of interconnected, accessible options.
- Information is easily and effectively communicated.
- There are incentives – including cost-related incentives and safe, risk-taking environments – for practitioners to involve themselves in staff development.

Community

- Staff development is an on-going process that encourages and supports collaboration among practitioners in all roles.
- Decisions about staff development are made within the context of larger program goals.

Voice

- Practitioners generate new knowledge within the system rather than knowledge simply being delivered.

- Practitioners actively plan, implement and evaluate all phases of staff development within the system.

Challenges in Inquiry

In an inquiry-based system, power and authority shift toward the practitioner. For some, their sense of control over their learning is greater as the means and modes of learning expand. For others, accepting and trusting that this more job-embedded, self-directed learning is valuable and "counts" can be challenging. Loucks-Horsley (1995) reminds us that it is important to know what learning looks and feels like as the practitioner stance toward knowledge and power changes.

Collinson (1996) states the dilemmas this way:

> When we open the pandora's box of staff development through inquiry, differing beliefs and conflicts will come out; and while increasing teachers' professional and interpersonal knowledge is desirable, we must remember that changing beliefs and behaviors is a long term process with a price tag (Collinson, pg. 3)

Further Collinson points out that we

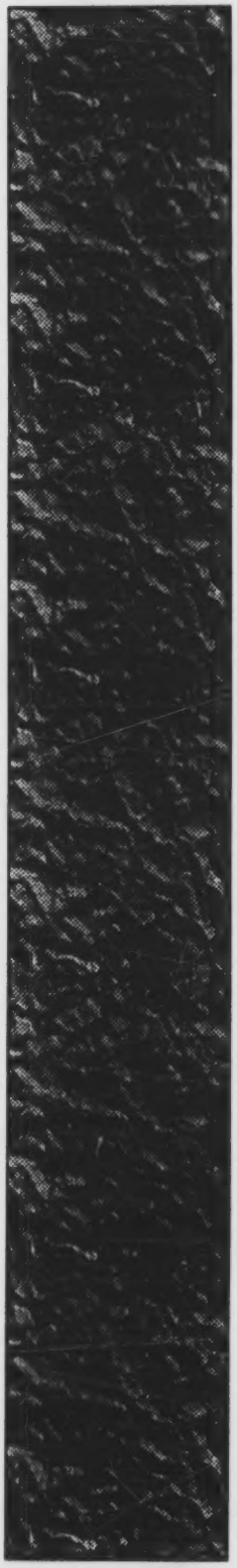
> ...can no longer afford to rely on teacher's haphazard, individualized acquisition of professional knowledge. Sustained staff development through inquiry is one way of systematically structuring continuous learning of professional knowledge...but it must also include on-going knowledge and practice of interpersonal skills. (pg. 4)...but teachers (administrators and tutors) will only learn interpersonal skills and develop the necessary accompanying attitude (open-mindedness) and dispositions (empathy and trust) if they are persuaded that strong interpersonal skills and research-based knowledge can enhance their teaching and workplace environment; if intensive, long-term development and coaching are provided; and if continuous learning of professional and interpersonal knowledge and skills is linked to what it means to be a teacher (e.g., personal improvement plans or teacher performance evaluations).

Making the case with part-time adult literacy practitioners that an inquiry stance toward professional development is worthwhile presents some challenges. Engaging teachers, tutors, and administrators to learn and improve their program together requires changes in the way people view and understand one another. Learning together in this way demands creativity, confidence, courage, commitment and caring. Providing interpersonal skills practice, additional resources and mentoring only begin to address the issues of an inquiry-based professional development system.

Recent case studies of inquiry (Hill, 1995; Short, Giorgis, and Pritchard, 1993; Lieberman and Grolnick, 1996) have identified that inquiry builds communities of learners with a common purpose and encourages multiple perspectives. Through these communities, practitioners became more self-directed, taking more ownership and responsibility for their learning. In addition, these communities resulted in greater connections for the participants between theory and practice, bringing about greater reflection on their own practice. In each of these cases, the leadership was identified as facilitative rather than directive.

Inquiry posits that practitioners use what they know to continue learning rather than approaching learning from a deficit perspective. Yet, for practitioners to use what they know to continue learning, there need to be opportunities for both collective and self-directed learning. Self-directed learning in inquiry:

> can be viewed as an attitude held by teachers who are actively engaged in constructing knowledge. Teachers make use of the resources in their environment, such as workshops and conferences, without giving up a sense of control over their own learning and their authority,



> grounded in their knowledge from experience and reflection. ...Teachers involved in staff development may be understood as interacting with the resources in their environment to structure their learning. These resources include people in their programs (administrators, other teachers, students, aides); people outside the programs (friends who are teachers, non-teachers, family, people involved in other programs, state level administrators, university faculty); activities (staff development workshops, conferences, meetings); material resources (journals, newsletters, curricula, resource centers); and the extent to which they teach in an environment which values and supports continuing learning. ...It is important that activities that are provided by local or regional programs or state level offices move away from being mostly episodic, a series of one-shot workshops offered to teachers on a range of topics that they often had no (or a minimal) role in identifying. (Fingeret & Cockley, p. 12-13)

When viewed in this way, self-direction is a stance taken by a practitioner regarding all of the resources available to enhance one's practice. If, however, self-direction becomes an isolating approach to professional development, placed on an already burdened, largely part-time workforce without the time, support and consideration for reflection, unintended effects might ensue. Brookfield (1993), talking about self-directed learning, cautions:

> How much control can really be said to exist when the dreams we dream have no hope of being realized because we are struggling simply to survive. ...Being self-directed is a meaningless idea if you are too weary at the end of the day to think clearly about what form of learning would be of most use to you...being the arbiter of our own decisions about learning requires that we have enough energy to make reflectively informed choices. (pg. 237)

Speaking of the conditions necessary for meaningful self-direction, Brookfield (1993) states:

> Central to a self-directed learning effort is a measure of unconstrained time and space necessary for us to make decisions that are carefully and critically examined and that are in our own best long term interest. (pg. 238)

And he concludes that:

> There is a certain irony in the fact that a concept so bound up with the ideals of liberty and freedom as is self-direction can end up serving repressive interests. Yet this is precisely what happens when the images of self-direction in most people's minds are of self-contained, internally driven, capable adults working in splendid, atomistic isolation. ...A view of learning which regards human beings as self-contained, volitional beings scurrying around in individual projects, is one that works against cooperative and collective impulses (pg. 239).

These considerations are important to the effective implementation of inquiry-based professional development.

Inquiry, as proposed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), Drennon (1994), Pates & Fingeret (1994), Loucks-Horsley (1995), Sparks (1994), and others, places a premium on practitioner-centered, practitioner-directed learning. Yet each also speaks of the collective nature of inquiry and the value of creating learning communities. So while a practitioner is speaking from greater authority, this authority is not seen as derived from individual, isolated examination but rather is informed and enhanced through discourse, dialog and debate within a community of colleagues. In inquiry, practitioners learn in concert with others, not alone and not exclusively at the direction of others.

Conditions for Inquiry

Drennon (1994a) reminds us that there are a number of practical concerns that challenge us in our efforts to embrace

inquiry. These are the provision of time "to engage in reflection, meet with colleagues, study the literature and research of the field, analyze data, and document classroom activity;" trust among teachers and between teachers and administrators; support for the process and its outcomes by program administrators, demonstrated by their willingness to adopt new ideas; and expectations.

Practitioners in Massachusetts point out that a facilitator, resources, and a vision are important conditions for effectively systematizing a process for program and staff development planning within a program. They speak particularly to committing resources for a facilitator whose role is "to move the process forward, to have a plan, to collect those nasty forms, to keep things going and to send things to our SABES (System for Adult Basic Education Support) center." (p. 36) Without the facilitator, "the job goes under the director's job description, and then it just becomes pushed in with everything else they do." (Chin, Serino, Smith, Zuegg, 1995, a conversation, p.36)

Leadership is an important consideration and feature in moving toward an inquiry stance in professional development. Effective leadership in inquiry is facilitative rather than directive. (Chin, Serino, Smith, Zuegg, 1995; Pates & Fingeret, 1994; Lytle, 1996) Facilitative leadership can be learned and developed; however, it takes time and commitment. Without effective leadership that is congruent with the efforts made to move toward inquiry, at the least, little happens and at the most, chaos can ensue.

Along with the challenge of leadership in inquiry comes the challenge of thinking of ourselves as learning communities, which

> requires clarity about learning outcomes and ongoing inquiry. It requires environments that attend to the vast array of individual differences and provide active, real-world opportunities to learn. Building systems focused on learning is a highly evolved form of professional development. (Loucks-Horsley, 1995, p. 265-266).

Loucks-Horsley (1995) further explains that in an inquiry system learning remains deeply personal and affects the way practitioners think about and do their jobs. Practitioners also learn "in an organizational context that strengthens the power of the system at the same time." Loucks-Horsley notes that in an inquiry-based system there is a shift in how practitioners approach learning. In the past, a practitioner may have attended workshops alone, but in a learner-centered system the practitioner tends to attend institutes as part of a team, learning from and contributing to a network of professionals, and participating in system-wide issues, leading to program improvement. However, Sparks (1994) points out that it is too often expected that dramatic changes will occur based solely on professional development programs aimed at helping individual practitioners to do their jobs better. "An important lesson from the past few years, however, has been that improvements in individual performance alone are insufficient to produce the results we desire." (Sparks, 1994, p. 27) In the model of staff development proposed by Fingeret and Cockley (1992), staff development planning includes program improvement as well as individual improvement. They make explicit the need to integrate both in staff development because they view the following as interrelated: management techniques, learner retention and progress, improved teaching techniques, teacher satisfaction, improved status for adult education, and staff

development. Hence, the need for integrated program and staff development planning is apparent.

Shifting Toward Inquiry

Many staff development models exist and coexist in the field. However, there is ample evidence in the literature to assert that a shift is underway in both K-12 and adult literacy professional development. (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993; Lytle, 1996; Loucks-Horsley, 1995; Sparks, 1994) Common across these approaches is movement toward supporting learning in new ways. There are, however, considerations that are unique to adult literacy professional development. Thus, we present the following adaptation of Loucks-Horsley's learner-centered schools paradigm shift (1995, p. 267) as a means for understanding the dynamics present in shifting toward more inquiry-based, practitioner-centered professional development in adult literacy. We suggest that in adult literacy we are shifting:

- From too much focus on *teacher needs*
  to more of a focus on *student learning outcomes*
- From too much focus on *individual development*
  to more of a focus on *individual and program development*
- From too much focus on *transmission of knowledge, skills and strategies*
  to more of a focus on *inquiry into teaching and learning*
- From too much focus on *"Pull out" training*
  to more of a focus on *job-embedded learning*
- From too much focus on *generic teaching skills*
  to more of a focus on *content, context-specific and learner-specific teaching skills*
- From too much focus on *fragmented, piecemeal, one-shot experiences*
  to more of a focus *driven by a clear, coherent, long-term strategic plan*

- From too much focus on *external direction and decision-making*
  to more of a focus on *internal direction and decision-making*
- From too much focus on *professional development as some people's job*
  to more of a focus on *professional development as everyone's job*
- From too much focus on *professional development for teachers*
  to more of a focus on *professional development for everyone*
- From too much focus on *professional development as a frill*
  to more of a focus on *professional development as essential*

Achieving this paradigm shift does not come without significant challenges. The movement of the system toward the practitioner creates tensions for all: teachers, administrators, tutors, aides, professional developers, and policy-makers. Loucks-Horsley (1995) points out that it is "difficult for people to envision what professional development might look like – how it would be different from what they have already experienced." She suggests that "when people become clear about a direction and have a vision of how things might look different, they have a better idea of what steps are necessary to move forward." (p. 271) It is hoped that this report will contribute to that direction for Virginia's professional development system.

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Chapter 2: Method

Introduction

This evaluation is distinctive for being both qualitative and participatory. In qualitative research, researchers study data gathered through interviews, observations, and the analysis of organizational documents. Qualitative research is a rich, contextualized process in which the researchers seek to learn about their subject by drawing out the understanding, knowledge, and unique insights of the persons interviewed. In participatory research, the researchers themselves are "insiders" who identify the important questions to be investigated and then participate fully in the collection and analysis of data. Because participatory researchers are members of the community being studied, they are assumed to have a natural rapport with informants, a deeper context than would "outsiders" for ascertaining meaning, and a significant stake in the outcome that directly contributes to the development of worthwhile recommendations.

In this chapter, we will provide the context, an overview of the current Virginia Professional Development System, and describe the evaluation process in greater detail.

Setting for the Study: The Virginia Adult Education System

Adult education occurs in schools, usually after hours, businesses, libraries, community colleges, churches, jails, and adult learning centers. Administrators, teachers, and tutors come from a variety of backgrounds. The majority of staff are part-time. In Virginia, most adult education programs are contracted and administered through the public school systems. Besides the traditional adult basic education, English as a

Second Language, and GED classes, there is a growing number of customized programs such as family literacy and workforce development. Virginia's adult education ranges from large urban programs with staffs of 20 plus and often their own resource libraries to isolated rural programs that may have a total staff of one teacher who shares a classroom in a school.

In the past ten years, an effort has been made to regionalize rural programs and consolidate resources, enabling the creation of a full-time regional program planner who focuses on adult education in a large geographic area. A part-time support position, regional adult education specialist, exists in rural regions to support programs and staff. One of the regional specialist's key responsibilities is to provide instructional assistance and professional development opportunities for adult education and literacy practitioners in the region. Urban programs often have a full-time adult education director but no regional support for professional development. Most small rural programs are administered by a school official with multiple and diverse responsibilities: for instance, an adult-vocational-community education director.

Professional development has always been a priority for Virginia, as reflected in funding at the state level. Currently, there are five state-funded mechanisms in place to deliver professional development services. They are: The Centers for Professional Development, the Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center (note: During the course of this project, these two have been consolidated under the umbrella of the Adult Education and Literacy Centers; however, they continue to have separate staffs and responsibilities), three regional summer conferences known as Virginia Adult Institute for Lifelong Learning (VAILLs), the Virginia Adult Educator's Research

Network, and an adult education newsletter known as PROGRESS. These entities are all funded through a competitive grant process.

The Centers for Professional Development (CPD) was created following the recommendations made in *Inquiry and Action* (1994), including a full-time professional development specialist at the state level. Currently, the Centers for Professional Development have three major areas of responsibility, each coordinated by a full-time professional development specialist. These are professional development plans, regional workshops and statewide meetings, and volunteer training. There is a director who oversees both the Centers for Professional Development and the Resource Center. A single advisory board addresses the needs and issues of both components

The **professional development plans** (widely known as and referred to as learning plans) for practitioners are coordinated by CPD staff. Professional development plans were designed as a way for practitioners to direct and shape their learning experiences based upon their specific questions, needs, and interests. They have become the cornerstone of the current professional development system. All professional development plans are developed locally with the support of a local or regional learning plan facilitator, usually a regional specialist or lead teacher. The Centers for Professional Development serve as a collection point for the plans, provide yearly training to the learning plan facilitators, and support practitioners who develop and submit their plans. Practitioners can receive financial support to assist with activities related to learning plans; however, any support for practitioner time is determined by the local programs.

Regional workshops and statewide meetings are a major responsibility of the CPD. Local or regional program personnel, usually a regional specialist, planner, or local administrator, can propose a workshop to meet the professional development needs of a locality. These workshops are supported through funds that pay for approved consultants, materials, and other incidentals such as meals, refreshments, and room rent if applicable. Generally, workshops are most often utilized in regions that have a regional specialist or planner. There are two statewide meetings for managers coordinated through this office.

The **Volunteer Training Office** supports volunteer literacy groups. In recent years, there has been a focused effort to include volunteer literacy providers in all adult education professional development activities.

The Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center has a lending library of over 10,000 titles including videos, software, and non-commercial materials. Practitioners can use a toll free number to request materials. There are also some on-line linkages available. Recently, the Resource Center has created a web site that posts information about professional development opportunities, staff directories, and links to other adult education web pages. A starter kit is available for new programs and new administrators. The Resource Center Associates, a revitalized program, supports small groups of practitioners who review and/or develop materials on a self-selected area of interest. The Resource Center staff consists of a full-time Field Services Coordinator, Librarian, and office manager.

Virginia Adult Institutes for Lifelong Learning are two-day summer institutes designed to provide practitioners an opportunity to come together and learn through workshops and

informal networking. Each institute is planned and managed by a different part-time coordinator and has its own advisory board. Two institutes are centered around ABE practice and one on ESL. Each institute accommodates approximately 200 practitioners. In 1996, the institutes were held at Marymount University, Radford University, and Virginia State University.

Virginia Adult Educators Research Network supports practitioner research. Practitioners pursue research questions of interest to their practice and receive a stipend and guidance from the Research Network. The Research Network coordinator also conducts research projects of statewide interest, such as a learning plan study. Twice yearly, the Network publishes the *Adult Education Reader*, a compilation of current relevant articles from professional journals, and supports groups of practitioners who act as editors, read, and select the articles. They also publish a *Summer Reading List* composed of books of interest to practitioners that are reviewed by practitioners. Staff consists of a part time coordinator and office manager.

The PROGRESS Newsletter provides practitioners with up to date information on the local, state, and federal levels. It publishes four issues per year, which are distributed to 2,000 practitioners. The PROGRESS is mailed directly to the home address and contains articles of interest to the field as well as a calendar of events. Each issue includes articles written by at least two practitioners who are paid a stipend. The current coordinator of PROGRESS also coordinates Southwest VAILL.

The Evaluation: A Participatory Process

Much has been written concerning participatory evaluation in educational systems in the past ten years. (Greene, 1986; Kolb, 1991; Lafleur, 1993; Cousins and Earl, 1992) The widely held

conclusion is that when stakeholders are participants in the process, the evaluation is more likely to be utilized. "A step beyond the participatory approach is collaborative research wherein program staff and participants may actually become involved in the collection and analysis of data. Collaboration can enhance the validity of results since participants often have important insights and inherent rapport and trust with other program participants from whom data is being collected." (Kolb, 1991).

This was recognized by a team member: Our team, rather than being a group of "outsiders," is a group of "insiders," representative of Virginia practitioners, so we can more easily ascertain the "shared meanings" of our profession (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

Who We Are

Team members were chosen by the lead investigator and project director based upon a competitive application process that considered geographic and job diversity as well as varying levels of experience and expertise within the adult education system. An additional criterion was that practitioners must be members of the professional organization, Virginia Association of Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE) because VAACE was a sponsoring partner in this project. An invitation was sent to all members of VAACE. Out of 30 applications, the lead investigator and project director selected six team members based on the criteria mentioned above. Team members were paid a stipend and reimbursed for all project expenses. Team members also had the option of receiving three graduate credit hours for their work. The selected participants agreed to attend working retreats, read specified materials, gather data, visit

professional development sites, review documents, conduct interviews and focus groups, keep field notes, analyze data, contribute to the final writing of the report, and maintain contact with the team through electronic mail.

Our team consisted of: a part-time ABE-ESL teacher with three different classes and locations in an urban setting; a part-time regional adult education specialist in a rural-urban setting; a rural specialist-administrator; a full-time consultant and administrator; a full-time urban volunteer literacy director; a volunteer literacy coordinator in a manufacturing plant; a full-time adult education instructor with responsibilities as evening high school coordinator, extended diploma program adviser and assessor, and GED instructor; and a full-time coordinator in an urban ESL Program. During the project year, one team member returned to graduate school, two team members changed jobs, and several took on additional responsibilities in their current work. One team member resigned as a result of an employment change. Two team members had participated in the staff development planning team process that resulted in *Inquiry and Action* (1994).

Each team member brought a uniquely distinct perspective based upon her job and work context. This proved invaluable in data analysis sessions. Making meaning from the practitioners' stories was enhanced by the insights and experiences of team members. For example, when we were trying to understand the anger in some voices from a particular area, a team member was able to provide some perspective as a participant in that setting, historical background, and a context which clarified our understanding. See Appendix A for further description of team members.

Meetings were arranged around work and family schedules as much as possible. Everyone kept a journal to record and reflect upon the experiences throughout the project. In addition, we each wrote our story of work and professional development that became part of the data.

We framed our work using *Teachers Learning* by Fingeret and Cockley (1992), and *Inquiry and Action* by Drennon (1994). These earlier works of practitioners in Virginia were influential in bringing about changes and largely shaped the current professional development initiatives in Virginia. Therefore, it was important that we understood and honored their work as we moved forward with this evaluation. Team members received a copy of both reports in their first information packet and frequent references were made to them at meetings throughout the year. In addition, *Qualitative Research for Education*, by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), was also supplied to every team member.

Involving Stakeholders

The directors of the professional development components and the state adult education office were actively involved in the evaluation process. We met formally in the early stages of the evaluation to assess their needs and obtain feedback regarding the team's work to date. All project directors were interviewed for this project. A second meeting was held later in the process to share and validate preliminary findings. Notes from these meetings are included in the data. As a result of information gathered at the initial constituency meeting in September, the team determined the following key questions for the evaluation:

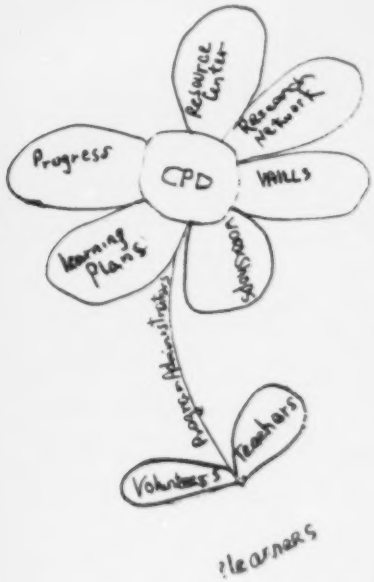
To what extent is the Virginia Professional Development System meeting the needs of adult education practitioners?
To what extent is the Virginia Professional Development System inquiry based?

In an effort to involve the field at large, an article was published in the PROGRESS and VAACE Newsletters inviting comment and suggestions. In addition, updates were given at quarterly VAACE board meetings and two state managers' meetings, and a workshop was presented at the VAACE Spring Conference. Appendix B includes the newspaper articles.

Data Collection

The entire team including the project director, lead investigator, and six practitioners first met as a team in July 1996. Thus, we began the work of getting to know one another, forming a team, understanding our task, and for some, learning about qualitative research.

One technique used to elicit each team member's understanding involved each individual drawing a picture of the Virginia professional development system. Drawings were then shared with the team. These drawings were useful in that they not only graphically showed our current understanding of the professional development system, they also showed our biases and knowledge gaps. In some cases, there was not an awareness of certain professional development components. This activity was repeated on two other occasions. These drawings were periodically reviewed and analyzed.



A team member reflects on her drawings:

> When I first pictured Virginia's Staff Development System I saw a top down model with federal and state mandate trickling into the individual programs and classrooms. Yet, as I talked to people throughout the data gathering process, I began to soften and see that while there are some handcuffs, there is much freedom.

These drawings became the starting point for our project. From there, we discussed and formulated interview questions for the first of three summer institutes, Virginia Adult Institute for Lifelong Learning (VAILL) participants. Team members using tape recorders interviewed over 50 practitioners attending the three summer conferences. Team members chose interviewees representing a broad range of roles in adult education and diverse ethnicity. Interviews occurred in hallways, on benches, and in the dormitory lounge at times that were convenient before, during, and after workshops. Interviews were then transcribed and returned to team members for review. A handful of interviews were not used due to technical problems with the

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recordings. Appendix C presents the demographics of interviewees.

Additional data sources included team member observations and field notes, interviews with project directors and key staff, documents submitted by professional development components, and transcripts of four focus groups. Also, included in the data is each team member's story of his or her work and professional development history.

Making Meaning from Data

The task of making meaning began with creating categories to organize the data. This was challenging for all, particularly for team members who had no previous experience categorizing data. With the facilitation assistance of Cassie Drennon, a project consultant, we learned about categorizing and coding data. The creation of coding categories was initially attempted by the whole group. However, since our meeting time did not allow for us to come to a satisfactory coding scheme, the group agreed to delegate the task to the project director and lead investigator. After they developed a coding scheme, it was field tested by four team members using actual interview transcripts. The individually coded transcripts were compared for consistency. The coding categories were then sent to the team for review.

Below is the coding scheme used in analyzing the VAILL interviews.

A. Practitioners – Context – where we live and work
1. relationships within program
2. learning needs – explicit and expressed
3. approaches to learning – inside and outside staff development system

4. roles – how practitioners describe their involvement – as planners, developers, implementers, participants, and evaluators of their learning

B. Learning

1. relevance to practice
2. relationship to program
3. impact on person, practice, program
4. incentives for learning
5. barriers to learning

C. Characteristics of Learning Support

1. options – freedom of choice
2. linkages – relationships among components
3. communication – getting and giving information
4. awareness of learners' needs
5. responding to learners' needs

D. Attitudes and Beliefs – understanding, and experiences with...

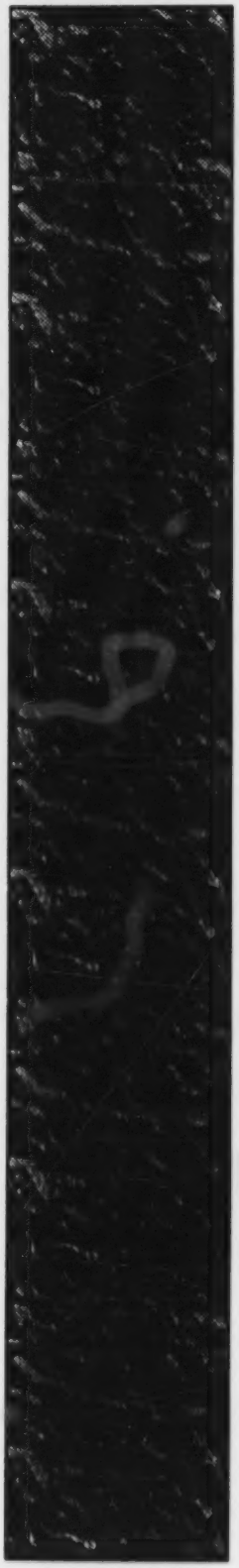
1. staff development – general
2. CPD
3. Learning Plans
4. Resource Center
5. Research Network
6. PROGRESS
7. VAILL

7a. ESL VAILL
7b. SE VAILL
7c. SW VAILL

E. Other

1. suggestions and ideas
2. dilemmas

All data was then coded independently by a rotating group of two team members. As a validation step, coders compared codes and negotiated meaning to reach a consensus. Often consensus involved double or triple coding of some data segments. There was usually a 70 to 90% agreement among readers on the codes. Coding at this point was done by four team members. Later, all team members coded the focus group



transcripts as it was important for every team member to both experience and understand the coding process.

In consultation with Ronna Spacone, facilitator for our January 1997 data analysis meeting, we further refined the coding scheme. A category called nonusage/confusion was added. Several other categories were combined and thematically rearranged. This was the final coding scheme used:

Data Codes - VAACE Assessment of the VA Staff Development System
8th Revision, 1/23/97

A. Practitioner's Context
1. Where we live and work
2. Relationships with colleagues
3. Involvement with Staff Development Entities – as participants, planners, implementers, and evaluators

B. Practitioner's Learning
1. Needs – explicit and expressed
2. Approaches
3. Impact on person, practice, program
4. Incentives and Barriers

C. Learning Support System Characteristics
1. Options
2. Linkages among components
3. Dissemination of information
4. Awareness/responsiveness to learners' needs
5. Non-usage/Confusion

D. Attitudes and Beliefs about understanding, and experiences with...
1. Staff development – general
2. CPD
3. Learning Plans
4. Resource Center
5. Research Network
6. PROGRESS
7. VAILL
7a. ESL VAILL
7b. SE VAILL

7c. SW VAILL

E. Other

1. Suggestions and ideas
2. Dilemmas

Data Analysis and Validation

Coded transcripts were entered into NUD-IST, a qualitative research software program, by the project director and an additional project support person. Collated data categories were distributed to the team for preliminary analysis at a two-day meeting in January. Emerging themes were identified and lists of further questions were generated by the team.

Based upon this analysis, we decided that we needed more information about the learning plan process, the role of administrators, and practitioners who do not attend VAILL. We needed to talk to targeted groups of practitioners: volunteers and teachers; administrators, and learning plan facilitators. Four focus groups were planned and conducted to obtain this information. The size of the focus groups ranged from 3 to 8 with a total of 20 participants in all. These groups met for a period of one and half to two hours in February 1997 in various locations throughout the state. For consistency, all groups were facilitated by the lead investigator and asked the same guided questions. Using a state derived mailing list, invitations were sent to all practitioners in each targeted group residing a reasonable distance from the focus group site. Participants were given compensation for mileage and a small stipend. We found that the manager's list contained many inaccuracies - in some cases, clerical support was listed; in others, former coordinators were still listed. A limitation of the study was that we were unable to involve part-time administrators in focus

groups despite our efforts to reach them through two separate focus group mailings. Focus group participants are included in Appendix C. Sample letter and focus group questions can be found in Appendix D. The focus groups were also taped, transcribed, and coded by two team members.

Data analysis continued both independently and in team meetings. An additional meeting was held at the home of the project director and although it was optional, five team members attended. A grid was generated which reconfigured our view of the data to reflect the characteristics of an ideal professional development system as proposed by Drennon (1994) and Cockley and Fingeret (1992). The grid is presented as Appendix E.

After the second constituency meeting held in April 1997, each team member wrote a working paper that synthesized selected literature and data, documented findings, and made recommendations. The five independently written working papers were remarkably consistent in their findings and recommendations. These working papers are the foundation for this report. The lead investigator and project director continued to meet and analyze data without the benefit of the entire team due to budget and time constraints. In addition, the lead investigator re-read all interviews in their original form to insure that the intended meaning was not lost in categorizing the data. Team members received draft copies of the final report and made suggestions in writing, via e-mail, and in conference calls that are incorporated into this document.

Challenges

The team process was both enriching and challenging. One value of the participatory approach, as stated earlier, was that

our understanding was deepened by multiple perspectives. As practitioners, we live and work in the milieu of adult education and thus could draw on our own experiences in interpreting and explaining events to each other. It was also helpful to divide up tasks among team members. This provided the opportunity to work in some cases on issues and processes of particular interest. All team members report that getting to know one another and working together was a significant benefit. However, our collaboration also presented us with the following challenges:

◆ Tension between learning and producing. We were very time conscious of project deadlines. Some team members thrived on the challenge of each new task; others didn't. For some, an adequate comfort level and expertise was not achieved prior to the start of a given task. A team member writes:

> My confidence level was low going into the project and the uncertainty continued with each new role that I was given. Even though, as a team we discussed the necessity of the struggle and the messiness, I had a difficult time internalizing that idea.

However, through practice and successful completion of tasks, a comfortable level of competence was achieved in most cases.

◆ Trust. The lack of confidence some individuals had in themselves and also in the group process occasionally impeded progress. Some team members felt that their work wasn't good enough . At the first constituency meeting, one participant exclaimed, "I'm just a lowly teacher talking in front of all those important people (directors)." There was not enough time taken in the beginning to establish trust in the group or the process. One surprising outcome resulting from this tension was that every decision was critically questioned and analyzed before we moved forward.

◆ Expectations. Some team members wanted more direction and limits than leadership could provide. There was discomfort with the lack of a map from the beginning. There was also uncertainty over whether the evaluation would have an impact. The state director, as part of the project constituency, was invited to several meetings to address this issue and answer questions.

◆ Nature of Inquiry. Team members were occasionally frustrated by the lack of clarity and linear path in their work on this project. It was not a case of knowing the right steps from the beginning but rather pausing and reflecting at each meeting and choosing a direction compatible with the information we knew at the time. In effect, we became models of the inquiry process. Consequently, some initial plans were discarded - a survey and case studies were planned and later abandoned. (The reason in both cases was that the specific data we needed could be more effectively obtained in focus groups.) A team member comments on the inquiry nature of this project:

> This project provided a compensated opportunity to work with practitioners around the state on an issue of common interest and to learn new skills in the process. It is inquiry-based staff development at its finest-our knowledge as practitioners is valued and shared; we use what we know to continue learning; and we have built a community of learners.

◆ Communication. A large team project with members scattered throughout the state made frequent communication a necessity. Throughout this project, we stayed in touch using letters, telephone calls, conference calls, regularly scheduled meetings, faxes, and electronic mail. Although we envisioned technology as a convenient communication tool, this was not the case. For various reasons, it was not until late in the project that every team member was simultaneously on-line and comfortable

using e-mail. The idea of a chat room, which was very appealing at the onset of our project, was not used due to the resignation of the information specialist at the Resource Center. However, everyone did use e-mail at least five times. Some even sent files via e-mail attachments. The project director tallied over 150 e-mail correspondences concerning the evaluation during the project year.

For Further Study

Our study is limited by the fact that we did not gather direct data on the impact of professional development on programs or learners. We were very interested in pursuing the relationship of professional development to learner outcomes; however, time and funding constraints did not permit us to pursue this line of investigation. We encourage future studies to take this necessary step.

Chapter 3: Findings

This study sought to examine the extent to which Virginia state level professional development components are meeting practitioner needs and the degree to which those components constitute an inquiry-based professional development system. To address these questions, we asked practitioners to tell us about what they do to enhance their practice as adult educators and what they need to be responsive to learners, whether those learners are our students or ourselves. We also asked practitioners to tell us about their use of and interaction with the Centers for Professional Development, the Literacy Resource Center, the PROGRESS Newsletter, the Adult Educator's Research Network, Learning Plans and the Virginia Institutes for Lifelong Learning (VAILLs). In reporting our findings, we focus on practitioners' learning in relation to these components, looking at them through the lens of the ideal professional development system as articulated by Virginia's Staff Development Planning Team in *Inquiry and Action* (Drennon, 1994).

Practitioner Approaches to Learning

The practitioners participating in interviews for this study are diverse and include teachers, aides, volunteers, and administrators of both public and private local adult education programs working in literacy, ABE, GED and ESL programs offered in schools, community sites, workplaces, jails, correctional facilities, PEMS and family-focused settings. Other practitioners interviewed included regional specialists, program planners, state staff and professional development project directors. To preserve their anonymity, all interviewees quoted in this report have been given pseudonyms.

Practitioners pursue their learning in a variety of ways both inside and outside of Virginia professional development. The practitioners with whom we spoke engage in a myriad of ways to enhance their practice and spoke freely about their efforts. Ellie, a volunteer tutor, indicates that she learns by "press(ing) on with my own skills." Volunteer tutors particularly report relying on their personal experience to guide their practice.

Nearly all adult education practitioners with whom we spoke look to their colleagues as resources for learning, seeking them out to help solve problems or provide perspective on their work. Doris, a regional specialist, says:

> Whenever I need help, I call the expert(s), (my colleagues)...whenever I get stuck on something I just pick up the phone. The greatest thing is networking. Two things I got out of the staff development planning team...One, the whole point is you're not alone. We tend to feel isolated. Being in that group woke me up to the fact that there's all kinds of people and two, we have so much talent in the state. That's why the VAILLs and VAACE are so important.

Colleagues are most often engaged in learning in the course of work as Leslie, an urban program administrator and teacher, shares, " a great deal of the learning came as my co-workers and I began to put the work into practice." Frances, an ABE and ESL teacher, speaks of her learning:

> When I want to learn something, I ask others who have dealt with that problem, or I experiment until I find a satisfactory answer. Usually my co-workers are my first source and then my coordinating teachers. However, ... some topics are out of the realm of our staff. Then I look for articles in professional publications or for workshops at VAILL and VAACE.

Still others are supported by the learning plan process, as Claire, a part-time ESL teacher, explains, "We have ILP

sessions in which we divide up to talk to each other. Unfortunately, we do not have enough of them."

Other frequently mentioned means of learning were professional conferences including VAACE (Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education), TESOL, (Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language), WATESOL (Washington Area Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language), COABE (Commission On Adult Basic Education), LVA (Literacy Volunteers of America), and AAACE (American Association for Adult and Continuing Education) and professional reading. Here Nancy, a family literacy teacher, tells of her experience of professional reading with her colleagues in a book discussion group.

> It could be just my learning so I really learn more from reading rather than hands-on things. So most of my learning has involved research of some kind, reading a particular book. Last year I did not do formal paperwork on it but I did one with a local teacher/reading group and we read Giovanni's book "Schools as Communities" or "Communities in the Schools" or something like that. I enjoyed that kind of thing, reading and discussing the ideas, hearing other people's thoughts.

VAILLs are a prized opportunity to gather with other adult educators for learning and talking together. Baseline Instructor Training, cluster training and other regional offerings, learning plans, the learning plan facilitator workshop, the Internet, and Research Network projects - including the symposium and serving as an editor on the *Adult Education Reader* - were also mentioned by more than one of the practitioners with whom we spoke. Practitioners, especially rural teachers, also look to the Resource Center to assist them in enhancing their practice. Some teachers report taking graduate courses in order to seek recertification.

Administrators' learning occurs within their management role. As a group, the administrators we interviewed are primarily full-time adult educators with more males proportionately than in any other group. Appendix C provides demographics for the study. Administrators included Regional Program Planners, ABE, ESL, GED, and/or EDP Directors, Volunteer Literacy Directors, and Program Coordinators. Some had multiple roles such as teacher-coordinator or vocational and adult education director. Like other practitioners, administrators spoke of learning on the job. Devin, a volunteer program administrator, indicates that he learns by "observing others and learning from my own mistakes." Mark, a newer administrator to adult education, talked of his "shadowing of the people who run the program" in order to better learn his new job.

Administrators attending VAILL spoke of attending other conferences in order to learn, including COABE, AAACE, LVA and family literacy national conferences. State and Regional Workshops were also mentioned. An administrator shares her view: "I go to every staff development inservice that I can. I try to go to a lot of the State meetings because I pick up a lot of things there about what trends are, how things are moving, and I think that's real important to let the staff know."

The state adult education managers' meeting was mentioned by several administrators as an opportunity for learning, with Paula commenting," they brought in that businessman to do marketing. That was wonderful...do more of that...get outside the field of education." However, Katherine states:

> But the new managers strand is I think probably one of the least beneficial things I've ever sat in on because I sat with them and I thought gosh, you know, if this is how you are going to learn to manage adult education and your program, you're going to have a hard time. So I really think something needs to be done for new administrators

more than the one strand that's done at the program managers meetings. That's just a thought.

Administrators who participate in VAILL look to it as an opportunity to network and get together. Ken, a program planner, values VAILL as an opportunity " to have a face to face interaction with a lot of people that I only communicate with (over) the telephone or e-mail throughout the year." Celeste, a rural administrator, reports: "A lot of what I gained from the last VAILL had to do with talking to people outside of sessions, informal networking and discussion of issues and events." She continues with a point that was shared by many of the practitioners with whom we spoke:

> I personally think that the more... discussion kind of scenarios or concepts that you can create the better...follow-up sessions to workshops in which people just sit and talk about the reality of applications and ideas.

The Management Development Institute, an initiative within the Centers for Professional Development with an advisory board guiding its efforts, was mentioned in response to a direct question with this comment from Katherine, an ABE administrator. "Yeah, they've got a nice book, a three ring binder. Yeah, I have it, I've dusted it." Olivia adds: "I was involved in that (MDI) a couple of years ago. I have no idea where it is, who's involved in it."

Some administrators reported multiple roles in the Virginia professional development system. Ken spoke of his presentations at VAILL and his involvement on the VAILL advisory group. Larry too spoke of his technology presentations at VAILL. Celeste spoke also of presentations prepared for VAILL and learning through her preparation of presentations for her teachers. Those administrators with whom we spoke who do

not participate in VAILL are less involved in their own professional development and adult education overall.

Practitioners look to local and regional level personnel and resources as their first source for information and learning. Professional development is understood and accessed best at the local level. When practitioners talk of professional development, they think first of the people they work with and what they do individually and together to enhance their practice. Sylvia, a part-time administrator and ESL teacher, says:

> I think a lot of what I do in staff development comes from just working every day with the people I work with and work around me ... the ideas from them, it kind of always pushes you to do, try to do better, to improve yourself, in a way, the sharing of things that go on amongst my peers. I think that is probably the richest because it is an on-going thing, problem-solving, ... I think that has the biggest impact on my personal staff development.

Both full and part-time teachers see professional development as a local or regional enterprise. Jo, a part-time ABE teacher, says: "My picture of staff development is more localized.... I don't see it as the state at all. I'm involved locally." One project director also expresses a perspective that localizes professional development:

> ...Really the better the staff development the more effort is needed by the local program. I believe strongly in local regional staff development. Not that much good comes from the stuff that is just centralized in Richmond or comes from Richmond. It doesn't work that way...you have to go to the regions and plan with the regions.

Supervisors were mentioned frequently as a positive source of information, particularly concerning the VAILLs. In some instances, we were able to clarify the role of a supervisor to be a lead teacher, administrator or program planner; however, we were not able to do so in all cases. Teachers particularly

mention their regional specialists as a source for information, learning, and enhancing practice. Regional specialists are seen as a link to learning and professional development. Lois, a regional specialist, talks about her role in providing information and materials at the local level:

> I have a number of resources that I loan out or give out. Whenever I go to do an inservice, particularly in an area that's perhaps not as responsive, I took along loads of samples and give them away, trying to get materials into the hands of teachers...

Information and access to professional development and learning opportunities are largely dependent on the local administrator, regional specialists and program planners. Opal, a part-time teacher, comments:

> In our area we have not had an adult education administrator until two or three years ago....because we now have somebody with the title adult ed. coordinator we have inservices and evidently there is a plan. We meet so many hours a year and its kind of spread out.

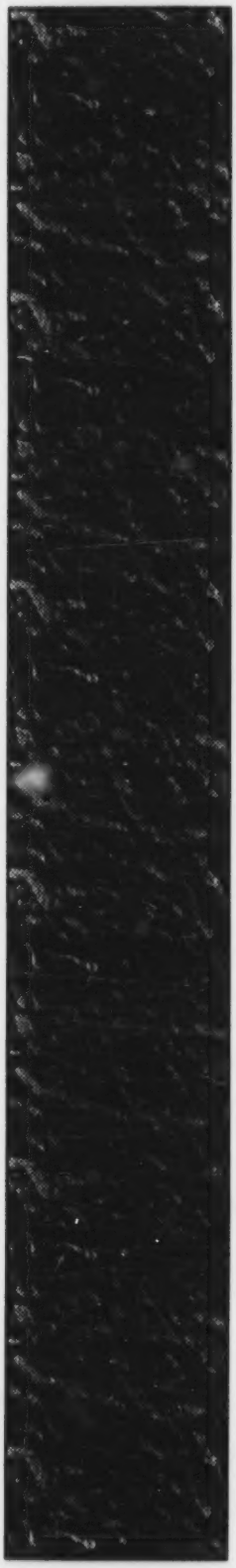
Holly, a part-time first year ABE teacher in a rural setting, speaks of the support she receives:

> I receive excellent support from the regional office. The materials are relevant and good. I feel lucky; I have team/mentor teaching prior to going into class. Colleagues are very important to reach out and make an effort.

While Moria questions what's available in her area:

> ... what bothers me is that I haven't heard of any staff development workshop in our area sponsored by anybody except VAILL. I don't know if that's my regional planner's fault or what, but this is the only opportunity I have had to come to a workshop.

In rural areas where there are not program planners and/or the regional specialist is spread across a large geographic region, participation in the professional development process is



less likely. Even with a regional specialist, local administrators have a significant influence on attitudes toward, access to, and participation in the professional development process. Vera, a teacher, recounts her experience:

> They (administrators) say you're supposed to...they told me to ask my regional specialist about it (learning plan). See that's the sort of thing (where I say,) 'Never mind, I'll just go to work today ...'

Urban area teachers think first of their local process, offerings and resources. They are less likely than their rural colleagues to know the role played by state professional development in their local professional development process. Professional development in urban areas is viewed as part of the school system or volunteer agency program. Currently, urban areas do not have regional specialists or program planners to support efforts at a more regional level. If there is a connection to state professional development, that connection is made by the administrator or designated staff, who facilitate or coordinate local efforts.

Some urban areas and volunteer programs have little or no contact with state professional development, particularly learning plans, and thus information and opportunities are not made available. Tutors seem to have lower expectations and demands of professional development. A volunteer tutor shares her view:

> If this is going to be your full time profession is one thing, but if you're tutoring and you also have a full time or a part time profession, then you have limited time.... I probably spend maybe three hours per week with lesson preparation and giving the lesson and then recapping so I know what I've done for the next lesson plan. For me really that's the best I can do at this point in time.

Many tutors support themselves, looking to local resources for assistance. Julia explains, "I have over 30 years of teaching behind me and I quickly judge what I need." Mary Lou says, "I volunteer and I do it completely on my own, and there is no one telling me what books I should use, how I should do it or anything. In that sense there is no support either except the satisfaction I get..." Others use their local literacy organization. Jill explains:

> I think the literacy office really does have a tremendous amount of things to do if you have the time to look at them, which I do every time I go to see my student.

Volunteer literacy providers also participate in workshops offered by local volunteer programs, the Virginia Literacy Leadership Council, and Virginia Literacy Coalition's New Reader Congress. Since these initiatives are outside the Virginia professional development system, we did not explore their usage by practitioners.

Once practitioners receive PROGRESS, they become aware of and are able to access the rest of the system. Having the 800 number for the Resource Center is another important link. Often, it is the administrator that connects new people to PROGRESS by sending in their names. Without these sources, practitioners are overly dependent on their administrator or program manager for professional development information. **Administrators, program planners and regional specialists serve as conduits for the professional development system linking teachers, tutors and aides to one another and the options available. If they do not, some degree of isolation persists for the program and its practitioners.**

The Professional Development Components: Working to Meet Practitioner Needs

Virginia Professional Development is composed of four components that are currently funded through a two-year competitive RFP process from Section 353 moneys of the Adult Education Act. The Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers which houses both the Centers for Professional Development (CPD) and the Literacy Resource Center is located at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. The PROGRESS Newsletter, the most widely known of the state level professional development mechanisms, is housed at Radford University. Virginia offers three Virginia Institutes of Lifelong Learning (VAILLs), two day conferences, held annually in July and August. Southwest VAILL is offered through Radford University. Southeast VAILL is offered through Virginia State University in Petersburg. ESL VAILL is offered through Fairfax County Schools ESL and held at Marymount University. Finally, Virginia supports the Adult Educator's Research Network housed at the Dayton Learning Center in Dayton, Virginia.

While each component is funded under separate 353 grants, the project directors meet three times per year, making an effort to integrate services and planning. The Requests for Proposal (RFP) that fund the projects do not yet state a philosophy of professional development nor do they require interaction and integration between the components. The effort to integrate service is reflected in the proposals submitted by the project directors which exhibit a desire, in most cases, to work together in a coordinated fashion to provide services to Virginia Adult Educators. A project director said:

> Since I've been involved in it, I see progressively more interaction among each of the coordinators and more talking about what's going on, what are they doing, what

> might be good for one program, how can you repeat, share, coordinate activities and things. I've seen that continually growing in the course of three years.

In general, practitioners with whom we spoke find these mechanisms useful and meeting their needs to varying degrees. They also have ideas for increasing their effectiveness.

Practitioners look to VAILLs for practical applications, information and the opportunity to gather with and learn from their colleagues. The practitioners with whom we spoke look to VAILL as an opportunity to come together with other adult educators to share and learn from one another. Some attend the VAILL closest to them, as Harold, speaking of SE VAILL, said, "For me it's (VAILL) closer, and I've been here in the past, and I've enjoyed it. You get a lot of good information." Still others travel a great distance for the information and interaction they find at a particular VAILL site, as Trish notes, "...I've noticed the people from Norfolk and from northern Virginia here at southwest VAILL and I think that's good because you need that information."

Adult educators of varying levels of experience participate in VAILL. New teachers gain from Baseline Instructor Training and the opportunity to be with others. Lisa recalls her first VAILL:

> When I was brand new out there, floundering, it really helped me figure out what it was I was supposed to do. I don' think anybody's really figured that out yet. It gave me reassurance that there were other people either less qualified or more qualified, years of experience or brand new like me. It was comforting to be among other practitioners, the networking.

Nancy, now a part-time teacher, also recalls:

> When I was an aide and went to the one at George Mason that was very helpful because I had no formal training...it was my first exposure to a lot of the concepts

> of adult education. I think that helped round me since my background is not education.

Many practitioners interviewed had attended VAILL several times and in more than one setting. They returned, not so much for the workshops, but for the sense of community and the opportunity to share experiences with other adult educators. This ESL VAILL participant recounts:

> This is my third VAILL, and I've enjoyed all of them. They come at the right time of year when you need some new ideas, need to be refreshed, get motivated, but at the same time it's for me a time to sit back and spend more time with colleagues talking about things we never have time to talk about. So there's a lot of inter-program development...I've always found them (VAILLs) very useful.

Other more experienced practitioners now attend VAILL, particularly SW and ESL, as presenters of the knowledge they have gained from their participation in learning plans, research studies or special projects. One project director reports:

> I do know of one person who a few years ago did a mini-session and last year did a full workshop session, and then this year has been accepted to the masters cohort program and she will tell you coming and doing that first mini-session gave her the morale, the boost, or the backbone or whatever, the confidence to go ahead and step further into the field.

Those attending the SW VAILL speak very highly of these mini-sessions, although one teacher commented that they were too short.

The vendors and Resource Center display are considered a ready source of helpful information and are the key reason some cite for attending VAILL. Practitioners generally appreciate the choice provided by VAILL through speakers, in-depth strands, workshops, mini-sessions and focus groups. While all of these are not available at each VAILL, practitioners find the options

beneficial. Participants largely value and appreciate the "big picture" perspective provided by state and national speakers, particularly relating to funding issues. Opal says, "I think we always need someone at the conferences to talk about that, how they see the money." More experienced practitioners, particularly teachers and administrators, expressed a need for advanced, in-depth experiences to better meet their learning needs. Some would like to see more national speakers as a part of VAILL.

Some practitioners experience some degree of sameness in the VAILL offerings as Devin suggests: "I think all of the VAILLs tend to offer many of the same workshops from year to year." Larry comments that he's "presented for the last five years." Morris, an administrator, is concerned about VAILL's lack of continuity.

> ...there doesn't seem to be much follow-up. One hour presentation on learning disabilities and that's it until next year, next VAILL, and maybe the same old thing all over again. (With) something as extensive as learning disabilities you really need to have something ongoing ...Our VAILL just seems to work from year to year. There's not much continuity on what went on in the years past.

Larry felt:

> I always think we need to go a step beyond. We tend, and it's necessary to do that, to stick with where we are in terms of there's always a GED, PREP course, technology of some kind, always computer-assisted instruction workshop, networking with the local literacy provider, that kind of thing. All those things are necessary but we never seem to take the other step which is looking at a vision, what the field will look like in ten years. It has changed so much in the last ten, and I think we are really missing an opportunity to get this many folks together with these kinds of backgrounds not to be taking that next step. I'm not sure what that step is.

The topic of learning disabilities was the most frequently mentioned area of interest along with a desire for more information, guidance and increased usage of technology, particularly e-mail, teleconferences and the Internet. Both of these topics invite a long-term, ongoing approach for development, linking VAILL activities to local programs through teachers, tutors and administrators.

VAILL brings Virginia adult educators together, providing a sense of community to both new and experienced practitioners. Most VAILL participants are seeking concrete, relevant, valuable information to apply in the classroom. Those not working in the traditional classroom setting and with more experience have to look harder to find and make VAILL offerings relevant. Tutors, administrators, and experienced teachers could benefit from additional planning, continuity, and diversity in the VAILL offerings to better meet their needs.

PROGRESS is widely received, read and valued. It is the most widely known component of the Virginia Professional Development System. The practice of mailing the PROGRESS directly to practitioners is succeeding. Celeste, a regional administrator, comments on the progress of PROGRESS:

> ...this year it's better than in previous years ... It used to just be terrible. I had the hardest time getting newsletters to my teachers and I would even have a hard time getting a bundle of them sent to me so that I could get them to my teachers... In the last couple of years it seems that if a teacher is not getting it all I have to do is give them the phone number and the person to call...and they get one, or they get on the mailing list for the next one. I think they've come a long way, I think it's a good product.

Practitioners are interested in what is going on in adult education in Virginia. They want to know about one another's

work, workshop offerings, conferences local and regional activities, and what others within the state and elsewhere are doing in terms of their practice. They look to the PROGRESS newsletter, along with local administrators, planners, specialists, peers and the VAILLs themselves, as their main sources of information.

PROGRESS is received, loaned and read. Bobbi, a coordinator and teacher, comments:

> I like the articles that are written by teachers who have had good experience in the classroom and they share those ideas, like the poetry.... (A) lady wrote an article about the poetry starter...as a matter of fact I gave that copy of PROGRESS to a student who is trying to write poetry himself so I think it is real neat that PROGRESS can be used not only for teachers and administrators but students read it too.

Harold, a full-time correctional educator, uses PROGRESS in this way:

> I usually look for the schedule of events during the year, you know, see what types of workshops. I'll be honest with you, that's the largest thing I look for, but I have read some real good articles in there too.

Angela, a tutor, speaks glowingly of PROGRESS:

> The PROGRESS...it gives you so many opportunities for new materials. Just the front of it comes with a lifetime guarantee. What I found on the back was actually stimulating...the articles are excellent.

Another tutor, Ron, expressed some concern that PROGRESS articles "do not often identify with the one-to-one" context, but he still finds PROGRESS valuable. Many tutors we spoke with do not yet receive PROGRESS and were delighted to know that they could contact their program administrator or the PROGRESS editor directly to become a subscriber.

Those who had written for PROGRESS commented favorably. Some practitioners interviewed would like to see the articles shortened. Also, those who were aware of the newsletter's practice of paying practitioners for their contributions praised that practice. Others, particularly administrators and regional specialists, suggested that PROGRESS be considered as a source for greater sharing of the learning plan process. It was also suggested that Virginia consider publishing PROGRESS more frequently in more of a newspaper fashion.

Most practitioners find the Resource Center and the Centers for Professional Development to be responsive to their needs and would like services more conveniently available. While not as well known as VAILLs or the PROGRESS newsletter, the Resource Center was the next most known component of the Virginia professional development system. It was described by nearly all as a valuable resource. Many with whom we spoke were aware of the increased connection between the Centers for Professional Development and the Resource Center and applauded that move. However, it should be noted that many teachers and tutors have a hard time distinguishing the Resource Center and the Centers for Professional Development. Planners, specialists, and administrators were aware of the effort to update the collections and strengthen the knowledge base of those responding to phone calls. Katherine, a program administrator, recounts her experience:

> I was unhappy with the Resource Center for a long time, but I feel like the last couple of times that I've called things have completely changed and they're much more prompt. The material I ask for is fairly up to date, its not antiquated...I feel like it's much more useful.

Many teachers with whom we spoke recognize the Resource Center name. A few had attended open houses or visited the Resource Center display at VAILL. Others had received starter kits of one sort or another. Administrators and regional personnel commented favorably on the value of starter kits and hoped teacher starter kits were in the future.

While comments were favorable, practitioners of all types commented on the limitations of a central, lending library as location, access, ease of borrowing and knowing what is in the collection. Some teachers and tutors did not know how to access and borrow. Saundra, a part-time teacher, indicated that the Resource Center "seems like 100 years away, miles away. It doesn't seem to be a very easy or practical source to use." Some looked forward to accessing the collection via computer for materials acquisition and review as this program planner suggests:

> I think the Resource Center is still growing...they're putting out a resource directory...keeping it upgraded and probably sooner or later we'll have it on the computer where we can pull it up on VAPEN or somewhere where we can browse through it there and it can be easily upgraded...

In addition, practitioners of all types requested more e-mail connections, chat rooms, and video conferencing workshops as means of accessing information and one another. Increased use of videotapes and books on tape were also suggested.

The Centers for Professional Development is known more for the services provided than by its name. Teachers and tutors speak of Baseline Instructor Training and other training, such as workplace training, but do not readily recognize the Centers for Professional Development name or connect CPD to the services mentioned. Others, like Holly, a new part time teacher, "have

trouble distinguishing between the Resource Center and the Centers for Professional Development." Most program planners, regional specialists, and some administrators were aware of the Center and its work including Baseline Instructor Training, cluster training, and learning plans. Volunteer administrators were aware of the Volunteer Training Office. Learning plans were associated with the Center but were also understood as a state-monitored, locally guided effort. In most cases, practitioners spoke very favorably of the response they got when requesting services from the Center, as Celeste, a regional administrator, shares here:

> I just think that's one of the most hardworking bunch of people I've ever seen in my life. Really responsive, very responsive... I've submitted probably as many as ten to twelve proposals a year for local regional workshops... and they've come through every time... In most cases we have someone locally that we would like to use as the presenter and most of these folks are already on the consulting list so we just request the support and it comes to us.

Baseline Instructor Training is universally praised as valuable. Bobbi calls it "a wonderful component..." Harold "enjoyed...baseline training...it's very helpful." Lisa talks about "wishing I'd had baseline training when I was brand new.... by the time I did it at the beginning of the last school year... I'd learned a lot." Many practitioners including administrators, planners, tutors and teachers seem to be participating in Baseline Instructor Training, using the experience in different ways to support their work.

Cluster or regional training is also prized and well received. These workshops, discussion groups, or other meetings held at the local or regional level with coordination and logistics provided through the CPD, serve many purposes for local

programs. Most often, they are workshops provided by local, regional or state practitioners or other experts listed on the CPD's resource list. The administrators, planners, specialists and lead teachers who schedule offerings through CPD reported receiving responsive, professional service.

Learning plans, submitted by nearly 500 practitioners in 1996, are administered by one person at the CPD who also has other responsibilities. Practitioners comment that they get what they ask for when requesting information or assistance regarding learning plans; however, most did not ask for assistance and received no communication regarding learning plans during the program year. A listing of learning plan topics was sent in 1997 to all learning plan participants.

The professional development coordinator in the Volunteer Training Office responds to the needs of volunteer administrators. Eve comments: "...he will find ways to give you training...he knows we're only going to be talking tutoring people for basic literacy...so we narrow the focus..." Meeting the needs of Virginia's eighty volunteer programs single-handily is a challenge, as the coordinator recounts:

> I think we can always strive to meet their needs better and the reason I say that is, well, it's obvious you want to do a better job. But second of all, there's just such a large group out there. There are 80 groups and I'm me, so it's very difficult for me unless the group advances some contact. I can call them, I can send out letters, ... but if they don't call back... I can't always drive down and stand in their doorway (waiting) for someone to show up.

The work of the Volunteer Training Office is not, however, as well known or understood by public program personnel. Interaction between private literacy programs and public program managers and administrators is minimal, in some cases, occurring only at State Adult Education sponsored

program managers' meetings and VAILLs. In other localities, there is cooperation at the regional level through participation in the Regional Literacy Coordinating Committees. Often, in these areas, collaboration occurs on RLCC projects.

The Research Network most exhibits inquiry, yet is the least known component of staff development. The Research Network embeds learning within the professional lives of practitioners, providing several avenues for participation. It is not, however, widely known nor directly used. Three out of four of the people with whom we spoke were unfamiliar with the Research Network, having never used its services. Most often it was equated with computers. We could not discern if this was the result of a special project the Network coordinated on technology or if it was related to its name. However, indirectly, some practitioners are aware of the Research Network products. Rachel, a part-time ESL teacher says " I think the Adult Research Network, or whatever they are, has a magazine – ABE Reader – and there were some interesting articles in there." Program planners and regional specialists were more likely to be aware of the Network and have some involvement with it. Ken comments:

> I encourage my teachers to be involved. I haven't been involved myself but we've had several of the people in our region that have done a research project. Our specialist is working on one now.

Those who have had experience with the Network speak very highly of that experience. Sylvia shares her experience:

> I did a Research Network project last year...and I went to a Research Network retreat in June. That was very nice because we were talking about really different things...people coming from a whole bunch of different backgrounds and just the opportunity to talk to people...(about) their questions...to see the common threads, that was really interesting because everyone had done something very different but there were some really

> common threads...in looking at...if what we're doing is making an impact on students, how do you measure if this is important. To me this was very interesting because there were people working in all different areas of adult ed. with different populations.

Through the *Adult Education Reader*, practitioners come together to review articles and compile an annotated text for distribution to the field. This process engages individuals where they are, creates community, and provides knowledge for all through the resulting *Reader*. Several practitioners spoke highly of their involvement with the *Adult Education Reader*. Trish comments:

> I always enjoy the editor's book. I think that's a wonderful idea. I like the fact of having readers read articles and summarizing them because I don't have time, except when I was a reader, to read a 20 page research article...I think those things are really, really good.

The Network also provides a *Summer Reading List* of recommended books that have been read and annotated by Virginia Adult Educators. Trish says "I like the *Summer Reading List*" and Celeste, a regional administrator, comments: "I did get a lot from reading a book and writing a review for the *Summer Reading List*. It did cause me to sit down and think more deeply about some critical issues."

The Research Network practitioner research projects provide a process for practitioners to engage in classroom and program research. Results are reported in *The Year in Review*, published annually since 1992. Recent studies have looked at mentoring, goal setting, learning styles, program perception, learning disabilities, technology, and alternative assessment. Each of these studies is well done and provides valuable information for the field of adult education. In most cases,

researchers are more experienced adult educators. Studies were conducted alone and by groups.

The Research Network, along with the PROGRESS newsletter, is the primary producer of text for the Virginia Adult Education System. Unfortunately, the Research Network makes very few copies of its materials available, thus limiting the impact of the knowledge gained. Trish voices the desire to have these materials in the hands of teachers: "I was an editor ... I think those kinds of things are wonderful...I think they need to mail to every single teacher." She goes on to say,

> I think they are probably ready now for an index of all their research material, findings (and) their books, because teachers (are) now beginning through their learning plans...(to) need resources they can have at home to research and read and think about and write and experiment in their classes.

The Professional Development System: Moving Toward Inquiry

Knowledge of the state level professional development components, and their relationship to one another reflects the practitioners' role in adult education, their location in the state and their years of service. Overall, when speaking about their own learning to enhance practice, the practitioners with whom we spoke include other services and have a much larger view of what professional development is than just the four state funded professional development mechanisms. From the practitioner perspective, professional development is complex, interwoven and in relationship to the state components, potentially confusing. Trish, a program planner, captures here what we found to be true in our conversations:

> They may get everything confused. I'm not sure a part-time teacher knows the difference between CPD, and Resource Center, and Research Network...all the terms

> are confusing and it's jumbled up out there that they know enough to say this is this, this is that. I do, I'm a full-time employee, but in my area of almost 100+ teachers there are probably only three or four full-time employees whether it's a planner or a learning center teacher or a lead teacher type person.

Those in program planner and regional specialist positions are more likely to recognize a system of professional development services of which some see themselves as a part.

Administrators, planners, and specialists, particularly those who have been in Virginia adult education for more than four years, see changes and express confidence that Virginia's professional development efforts are evolving. Bobbi, a coordinator and teacher, says:

> I think they've done an amazing job. When I first started there was very little at least that I was able to take advantage of.... there was no format or approach much less baseline training. Over the years since 1987 that's one of the things that impresses me is the plan to develop staff development and then they followed through with it in the form of CPD and the Resource and Learning Center and the Research Network. I'm very, very impressed and I've benefited from the foresight in planning it first and not just jumping in. Each year there have been definite stages that were planned, you know, of adding this and that. I think it's been very beneficial to teachers.

A program planner adds:

> It's much better than it was four our five years ago. I would say a teacher who came on board 4 or 5 years ago was just put out to pasture and left to graze with whatever knowledge they had and maybe not near as much assistance as there is available now. I think in the future its going to be an even more organized situation.

Another program planner says:

> ...Just probably in the last year or two (staff development is) starting to come together as a system...I think it is

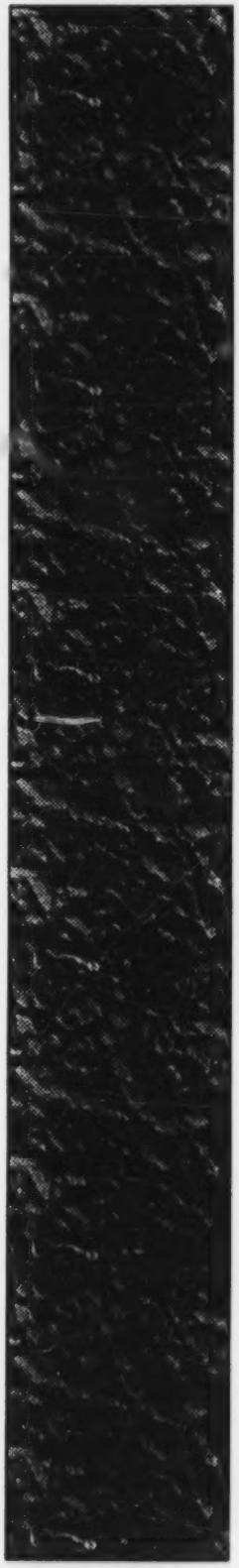
> beginning to center around the Centers for Professional Development. I think its becoming the central body and its becoming known and I think they are trying to develop all avenues, make it possible for anybody to access in numerous ways...I think that is a tremendous mission. It's not done but I certainly think we are getting there.

Wanda, a part-time lead teacher, sees a change in the system and expresses it this way:

> It used to be a workshop system, now it's more of a learning plan system...individual practitioner research and projects, but there are also the workshops that are still there.

Still others, particularly part-time teachers, do not recognize a system that they can articulate. Claire, a part-time urban ESL teacher, says, "My sense is it's very ad hoc," and Lisa, a part-time rural ABE teacher, comments, "If there is a system, it's so bad I've never heard of it. It's buried. The only thing I know for staff development is go out there yourself and try to find it." Tutors are least aware of the components of the system, their relationship to one another, and what professional development might offer them as literacy practitioners. Their first source of information is their own experience, their literacy agency and then their peers, as they work often in one-to-one tutoring situations away from the literacy program office. Tutors participating in the focus groups were enthusiastic to learn about what was available and looked forward to receiving more information by requesting the PROGRESS newsletter.

Practitioners' knowledge is increasingly valued within the professional development system, with some opportunities available to share the knowledge gained. Virginia's professional development system is shifting toward a more learner-centered approach in which practitioner knowledge is valued. This shift is evident in the practitioner-centered language used to describe



Virginia professional development. Sylvia, a part-time administrator and ESL teacher, comments that:

> as a practitioner we have valuable information, what you're working on is really important and you contribute to the field...we want to support those in the field but I'm not sure the support piece is always there.

Bobbi, a coordinator and teacher, comments that professional development is "more oriented to the individual". Rachel, a lead teacher, says "it's teacher-oriented, it's teacher input." And Candy, a part-time teacher, says, "...individually, we are now in the drivers' seat for our own staff development..." While there is recognition of a shift toward a learner-centered system, the shift is far from complete, particularly for part-time teachers who are the majority of Virginia's adult educators.

In Virginia, while not all practitioners engage in professional development, the system is open to and used by all practitioner types including teachers, administrators, aides and tutors, representing a wide variety of agency types including correctional education, PEMS, jails, workplaces, volunteer and public programs. These practitioners are involved in the system in a variety of ways, as participants, planners, implementers and evaluators of most phases of professional development.

Individual system components and their advisory boards do use practitioner-generated knowledge and input for planning purposes. The 1995-96 *Technology Initiative* effort grew out of a review of learning plan questions and is an example of collaborative planning, implementation and evaluation. This project included a survey sent through the PROGRESS, coordination and a research project undertaken by the Research Network, and in-depth sessions presented at all three VAILLs using staff from the Resource Center, the Research Network and

practitioners. *Cyber This Cyber That* (Cockley, 1996) was published as a result. A project director describes it as:

> A coordination between the Research Network, CPD, and the VAILLs. It was a huge success. The Research Network did a survey to find out what people needed, what they wanted to know, and worked together with the VAILLs to offer in-depth sessions covering those topics and it was a very wonderful experience.

A teacher and coordinator comments that she "helped... in developing some of the questions that pertain to software," for the survey and a volunteer literacy administrator, "presented in the technology area" at one of the VAILLs.

As implementers, practitioners are the contract recipients and coordinators of the Virginia Professional Development projects. Two of the three VAILL directors are practicing or former literacy, ABE or ESL educators, as are the Progress and Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers directors. Further, more than 50% of the presenters at the VAILLs are Virginia practitioners, many of them teachers. Mini-sessions at SW VAILL are primarily Virginia teachers, administrators and tutors sharing the results of their work through learning plans, research projects or special projects.

Morris, an urban administrator, facilitates the sharing of knowledge in this way:

> We have about 15 or 20 things going on (in our program) and I'm amazed every time that I make that circuit when I see something that's really good, really inspirational, then I'll ask that teacher to present it to the whole group in a training session so we can all learn from that.

Trish, a program planner, looks to teachers saying:

> I want to get...to where teachers can lead a lot of the sessions at the regional cluster training and that they have the time to prepare and feel comfortable doing that.

Practitioners complete evaluations at VAILLs. Participants at ESL-VAILL receive a follow-up assessment months after VAILL to assess the impact of their experience on their practice. The Research Network, the Resource Center, the Centers for Professional Development and the learning plan coordinator all seek evaluative input from participants and the field at large through surveys and advisory board input. Virginia practitioners are evaluating the entire professional development system through this 353 project. As practitioner evaluators, this project is inquiry-based professional development where the knowledge of practitioners is valued and shared, where what is known is used to continue learning, and where a community of learners is being built.

Ways Practitioner Knowledge is Shared

◆ Talk. Practitioners are creating new knowledge regarding adult education practice in Virginia through the learning plan process, research projects, special projects, workgroups and Baseline Instructor Training. Practitioners come together to share their knowledge, learn from one another and ask additional questions largely as presenters and participants at cluster trainings, local and regional meetings, VAILLs, and TESOL. E-mail was mentioned as a vehicle for conversation used most often by administrators. Paula, a new administrator, explains:

> We have e-mail in our office and we're using that. We're trying to build our address book for e-mail to communicate to other counties. Any way we can connect with other people, know the names, who's doing what in what county, make a phone call, send an e-mail, to help us all so that we're not constantly reinventing the wheel.

Some mentioned learning plan sharing sessions as an opportunity to talk, but such sharing sessions were not common. Some opportunities to share learning plans were not well received or attended. One learning plan facilitator comments:

> We could have a workshop where people share their learning plans which could be done through focus groups. I had to corral people for two years to do their learning plans so last year I didn't go to that effort but we should encourage people who put a lot of work into their learning plans to share.

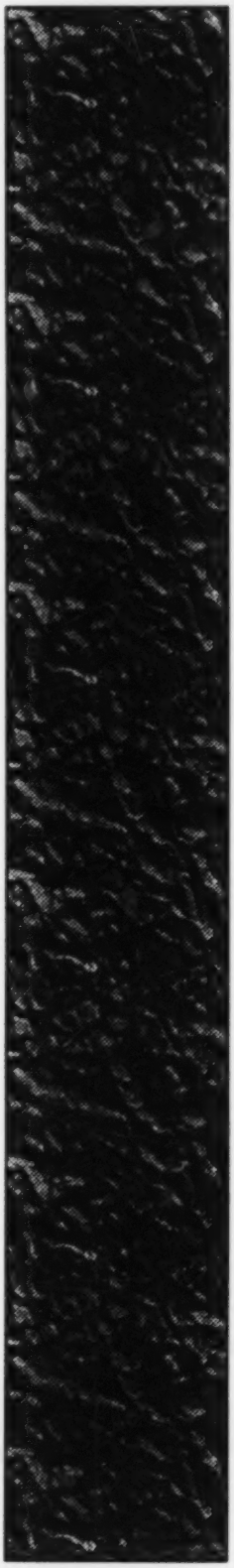
◆ Text. The knowledge generated by Virginia practitioners is written and shared through the PROGRESS newsletter, learning plans, and the Research Network's *Year in Review*, *Adult Education Reader*, *Summer Reading List*, and special reports, such as *Cyber This Cyber That* (Cockley, 1996). In addition, Baseline Instructor Training and other workshop modules generated by Virginia practitioners are available through the Centers for Professional Development, as is the Workplace Workgroup's *Virginia's Guide to Workplace Education*, a three year practitioner-led effort to capture Virginia's workplace education practices. The database of learning plans has great potential that has yet to be fully tapped as a source of practitioner knowledge.

Special projects coordinated by the Research Network and involving the CPD, Progress and the VAILLs lead to new understanding about the technology and assessment in the Commonwealth. Virginia's Baseline Instructor Training and ESL Basics are curricula created, delivered and continually revised by Virginia practitioners under the guidance of the Centers for Professional Development. Other special projects, (i.e., funding practitioners to create curriculum) resulted in additional workshops now being offered through the Centers for

Professional Development and the Workforce Improvement Network, a state funded effort to enhance the capacity and capability of Virginia adult educators to meet the basic education needs of employers and employees. Reports from these projects and presentations at VAILLs share with the field what is known and leave a record for others to explore. The PROGRESS newsletter is also a ready source of practitioner text. The newsletter editor pays practitioners for their contributed articles, the value of which can't be overemphasized.

◆ Technology. During the course of this evaluation, the Adult Education and Literacy Centers initiated the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Network, an electronic listserv designed to link practitioners with one another. The database is still in the process of development for broader access and use. Practitioners mentioned technology and its use second only to learning disabilities as a topic of interest and need. Continued development of useful electronic communication and information tools including video-conferencing, chatrooms and email, will serve to strengthen the field. Practitioners express a need for such tools and a need to learn more about how to best use them.

Inquiry-based professional development is most often equated with the activity of learning plans and is seen as an independent, self-directed enterprise requiring time and paperwork. Although it is the intent of learning plans to provide a strong mechanism for valuing practitioner knowledge within an inquiry-based system, most practitioners who have participated in learning plans have mixed feelings about their value as currently implemented. Some practitioners value learning plans as an opportunity to reflect on their practice. Holly, a new part time ABE teacher, describes her leaning plan:



> My learning plan last year, one of the components was to do a journal, to do journal entries approximately 5 minutes every day after class. I...used...an article...that said your journal didn't have to be anything profound, and it didn't have to be just a calendar of events, it could be used to ask questions that you yourself needed to know. Maybe when you refer to it later you would realize that...you had come up with the answer to that question.

Nancy "think(s) learning plans are excellent. I think teachers need to be role models for their students, and I think they need to make students aware they are doing this. Teachers become students and learners. If you're learning as a person... then you're a better teacher." Wanda says,

> It's (the learning plan) ...(is) allowing me to go where my interests lie... Learning plans give me that freedom to go on to something else that's not part of my job.

When asked if she thought the learning plan participation was changing practice in the classroom, another teacher and new learning plan facilitator answered, "I believe the quality of...the human being who is taking part in this activity is getting better."

Learning plans offer variety and choice. Some of the topics explored by practitioners include becoming computer literate, connecting literacy people with community colleges, reading professional literature, tracking GED graduates, improving retention of students, peer observation of other programs, learning disabilities, stress management, assessment, and visiting the Resource Center. Those who persevered and had an end product felt positive about the experience. Generally, those who worked with others to do their learning plans were more satisfied with this form of professional development than those who worked alone:

> If you can do it (a learning plan) as a group maybe once a month,... and you just... get together, and you have one person write it all down; we're going to do this and this,

> ...that's fine. But to send somebody home ...with absolutely no idea what they're doing... what the end result is (it's too difficult).

Moria, a part-time ABE GED teacher and learning plan facilitator, is representative of practitioners who appreciate inquiry but wonder about the acquisition of shared knowledge, particularly for beginners.

> I like the inquiry-based as I understand it to be. It is very freeing I think as a teacher to know that whatever you want to learn is believed to be important. I do wonder if there are not certain concepts, strategies, whatever that ought to be universal...shouldn't all ABE GED teachers receive training on how to teach reading because a lot of the teachers that come in don't have that background.

Wanda, reflects on how it can be viewed:

> I don't want to say the learning plan is research, but it has some of the elements of research because you really have to define a problem or something you want to work on and that's very independent and it's so much easier to say, 'Here's a list of workshops. What are you going to attend?' Traditional learning versus progressive learning.

From one Project Director's point of view, learning plans are adding to the knowledge of adult education:

> ...They (learning plans) help to pull together information that is available. They help to disseminate that information. People may learn new things they had no knowledge of previously, or they may have their own personal beliefs affirmed...There's a lot of learning being verified, being formalized, being put to print out of this process.

Some practitioners were introduced to learning plans as a mandate, others as optional, with varying results. Claire gives her view:

> There is nothing more valuable than teacher interaction, but if I hadn't been forced to do a learning plan, I wouldn't have made the time for it, and I would not have known

> that there were a lot of resources available..., so that really started my learning process.

Wanda sees it somewhat differently:

> The way we introduced it (the learning plan), 'From now on this is the way our professional development is going to go'...It was kind of forced into the system. I think maybe a better way would have been, 'This is an option. Workshops are also an option, or you can combine them.'

Ken, a program planner, explains why he requires learning plans:

> But a learning plan, that's just a basic thing, what can you do to enhance your program, to enhance yourself, to improve what you're doing, to create something differently, in other words, you're just asking someone to think. I tell them that it's a necessity and it's a requirement to teach for us and I expect it to be turned in. We have very few requirements other than that, so I don't think it's a whole lot to ask for.

Incentives encourage participation. Jo relates her experience:

> It (the learning plan) was not required, but it happened to be...the year of my recertification, so I really needed the points, so it was a good way for me to get forty-five points and combine my recertification with an activity that was beneficial.

Reflection is an important part of the inquiry based model. Trish, a regional program planner, explains:

> They (practitioners) don't have time to reflect in a teacher's meeting...but in preservices and year end evals and planning sessions, they rarely have time to do reflective kinds of things that are required for inquiry development.

Many practitioners experience learning plans as a time-consuming, independent, self-directed enterprise and focus on the required paperwork. Virginia's part-time teachers, who

represent the largest portion of Virginia's adult educators, currently do not see themselves as having the time or resources to successfully engage in learning plans. The learning plan process, as it has been presented, is largely understood as engaging in learning projects alone and on their own time. These practitioners expressed dismay at the isolating nature of learning plans.

Nancy, a family literacy practitioner, comments, "It seems like the emphasis is becoming more and more on individual learning rather than programs." An ESL teacher comments, "To do a good learning plan really takes a lot of time and generally I'm not motivated to work by myself." Ann shares:

> If you send me home with a paper to do this (learning plan), even with guidance, I don't want to take that much time, so I'll bow out of the whole process. But if you let me meet with (a colleague) and other people, brainstorm, come up with a project in which we have common goals, I'll do that, and I will use them as local resource people.

Creating a learning plan involves completing a process and documenting your plan at a learning plan session, usually held at the beginning of the program year. For some, the process of filling out learning plan forms was burdensome. The part-time nature of the profession and the existing paperwork requirements lead some practitioners to focus on the paper as opposed to the process.

Ann comments that she does not care "to do tons of paperwork for $20.00." Laura, an ESL coordinator, tells of her learning plan experience:

> I filled one out and didn't do a thing with it...until a supervisor said we had to have them into the state...It did not motivate me because I do not have the time nor the discipline to really focus...to fill it out and really do it because there are so many other things that are taking place.

Even though the activity may be valued, paperwork is unpopular as Crystal says:

> I had three part time jobs, and most adult education people have even more..., and I resented having to fill the form out. The information was terrific, but finding the time to get this thing filled out and handed in was just (too much).

Volunteer practitioners are especially sensitive in this area. Marge comments:

> ...Just asking volunteers to fill out that extra paperwork, the initial reaction is no, this is more paperwork, but the end result is yes, this is really useful. I can change my tutoring from this a little bit...I'm afraid we'd have a mutiny if I asked them to fill out more paperwork.

Many practitioners have not experienced learning plans in the spirit in which they were intended. Becky, currently a lead teacher and learning plan facilitator, describes how she was first introduced to learning plans, "It (the learning plan) came up for 15 minutes. It was here and gone. Here's a form; fill it out."

Practitioners report that feedback is essential to their sense of satisfaction with the learning plan process. There is a lack of feedback in the learning plan process which is leading to a lack of motivation and extinguishing enthusiasm for learning plans in many programs. A welcome letter and a survey at the end of the year are sent to practitioners who submit learning plans, but there is rarely CPD initiated contact in the interim.

Becky, a lead teacher and learning plan facilitator, speaks of the issue of feedback she's encountered in this her first year of facilitating learning plans:

> Feedback is a problem for you on every level, but feedback is a problem the teachers brought up for not wanting to do the learning plans. I did this two years ago and I sent it in. Nobody ever said anything and I never saw it back, nothing happened. And they've had things

> sent to Richmond. I don't know what the plan was supposed to be but there is some ache about that, and some angry stuff about that. We never hear anything about it, we do this thing and send it in and then what?

Sylvia comments on her experience:

> With the learning plans if somebody ever followed up, I mean nobody has ever asked me about my learning plan whether on the state level or program level.

On the local level, the administrator and facilitators are crucial.

Valerie, a teacher, comments:

> ...Your supervisor or coordinator has to be willing to take part of the responsibility for sitting down with you and working out something that is appropriate for you...You have to have feedback, and it has to be something that is positive for you.

Bobbi says:

> I think that so many times we go to staff development or have these experiences but no one really follows up to ask us if we're implementing it and how it worked.

Becky speaks here of the value of getting together, recognizing the learning plan as a vehicle, not an end:

> I'm not sure that learning plans are so important. I think what's more important is that there is an excuse to come together and talk and to learn to rely on each other and ask for help and in the long run those are the things that make the difference.

Lois, a Regional Specialist, comments on the challenge of providing feedback:

> We also do individual learning plans in our area too...but I can learn how other people are following up on learning plans. I find that's the hardest thing to do. You can get them interested, you can get them started, but following up on them is difficult.

Lois goes on to talk about where she is successful:

> (One particular) center has put in a staff development system that has quite a lot of kick to it. You have to earn your 10 hours, each hour is worth one hour of your pay, which it's supposed to be, but there are point systems, you get x number of points for attending VAILL, you get x number of points for reading a book, x number of points for attending a class, then once you arrive at your 10 hours then you're paid. I've given Susan Joyner a copy of this; she has a copy of __ Center's staff development system. All those teachers participate. Maybe if they choose not to earn up to their 10 points they're not paid the 7 points they earn. No problem there. I get their learning plans and I enjoy following up with them and I think that they enjoy them because they're already, it's a meaningful part of the process. But I have no clout in other areas at all. I don't have any clout in __ Center, I'm just the resource person. I'm not an administrator, I don't sign anyone's paycheck. I'm an encourager and I'm a facilitator and a provider of information.

While learning plans were not always embraced for both philosophical and structural reasons, nearly all practitioners with whom we spoke who had done a learning plan, particularly teachers, could articulate their learning plan and how it impacted their work. Sylvia combined a research project and her learning plan.

> ...(I was) looking at needs to assess benchmarks for student progress...predictors of success...alternative assessment. Now we have another alternative assessment project so this will help inform that project...we're looking at how confidence...if there is some way we can evaluate that and predict success from within a class.

Wanda, a part-time, urban, ESL teacher with four years experience, shares:

> My first year I wanted to find out about cross cultural training so I did some research, I got some articles through the Resource Center and I was also able to attend a conference...I got a lot out of that, a lot of training techniques that I could apply to annual cross-cultural training with my teachers...Last year I did two

plans. As lead teacher I just found out I was not that effective in staff meetings and I wanted to increase that...My other part of the plan was a research study interviewing ESL students, background, to find out what they liked and didn't like about the curriculum...I'm applying it indirectly.

Claire, also a part-time ESL teacher:

My first class had an Indian and a Vietnamese student...both were incredibly bright people who had large vocabularies and were almost totally incoherent in English...Needless to say since I'd never taught this before and it was a TOEFL class how do I teach pronunciation, how do I get it in a TOEFL class, how do I do it, physically how do I do it, what do I need to know? So that became my learning plan and I did it for two years. I can't honestly say I helped the Indian student. That first year was a very difficult year. Maybe he was just incomprehensive, maybe the stream of words...some of their peculiarities that almost all of them bring into English. The Vietnamese students who leave off the endings of words for example...by using limericks and songs giving them some rhythm in English. Now it's still not a pronunciation class but if I hadn't done that as an ILP...I wouldn't have made the time for it.

Valerie, a veteran ABE teacher, says:

My learning plan, I was not very computer literate, and I wanted to use the CCC Lab with my students. So my learning plan was to familiarize myself with the curriculum and how to do reports...and so that was my learning plan for two years. First year was to familiarize myself with the program so that I felt comfortable working with my students...the second year was learning more reporting practices and refining what I was doing, and now I'm doing a study on participants... I was trying to see if there was any difference in the rate that different students learned at different levels... I haven't found any, but it's very positive, it's how much time you have to put in on it and how serious you are... Since I've taught and done quite a lot of things previously...this was my new area of working... and I wanted to find out as much about the program as I could.

Each of these practitioners participated in a facilitator led learning plan development session at the outset of the learning plan process. Also, each had the opportunity to share at least once during the year. It is also interesting to note that the each learner determined the scope of her plan. These practitioners engaged in on-going learning projects and chose to conduct them over several years.

Learning plans acknowledge that practitioners' questions are a legitimate source of learning, offer added knowledge to the profession, provide opportunities to explore interests, provide the means for variety, choice and expansion of vision, participation in the system, and the potential for networking experiences with other practitioners. However, barriers to the learning plan process include the paperwork, the lack of feedback and support from CPD and local programs, lack of sharing among colleagues, feelings of isolation, confusion over whether or not learning plans are mandatory, the part-time nature of the profession, and the need for more time to reflect.

This finding suggests that the notion of learning plans as a vehicle for embedding learning in the context of the learner has merit. In addition, with attention given to the issues of organization, support, and feedback, learning plans (individual, group, and program) have great potential for transforming practice and programs and informing regional and state level gatherings about what works, what doesn't, and what is problematic in the practice of adult education in Virginia.

Practitioners say they want to learn with others. Opportunities exist in Virginia professional development to better develop and promote on-going communities of learners. VAILL participants overwhelmingly indicated that one reason for

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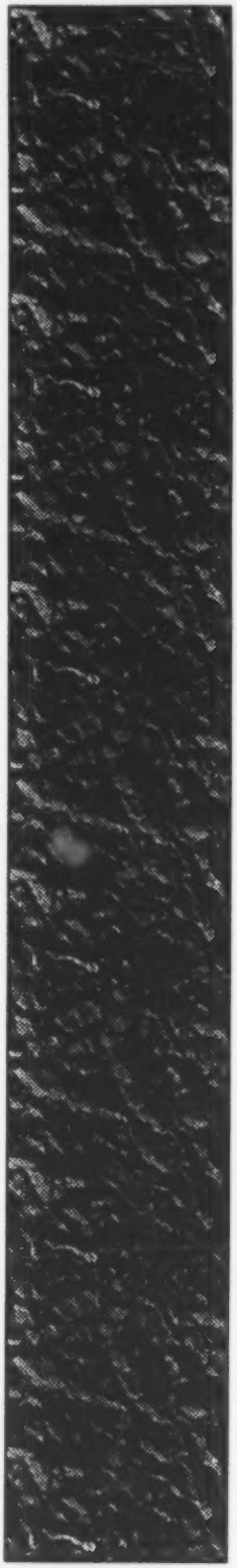
attending the conference is to connect and seek a sense of community. This was particularly the case with the ESL and SW VAILLs. In the same sense, regional workshops offered through CPD, provide opportunities for networking among practitioners. The Research Network and the Resource Center Associates Programs are natural arenas for the development of networks of practitioners working together on topics of common interest. This 353 project to evaluate Virginia professional development has also served as a knowledge generating, community building opportunity.

Practitioners of all types spoke with a longing for a greater sense of community, of being a part. Janice said, "Well I think it's good that we can get together and see other professionals in our business. To feel a unity, support from an organization, not like you're a single unit but that you're really connected." Ann, a literacy volunteer, emphasizes her need to work with others and receive feedback:

> Perhaps when I was thinking back of all the paperwork I've done through all the years and I've said the most successful experiences I have had have been in groups with other people, but seldom and I have worked my heart out for a year at a time sometimes, sometimes projects that were longer, having no feedback.

Those who experienced a sense of community did so through the Research Network, the REEP cluster trainings, as a baseline trainer, or being a member of a local learning plan discussion group.

Learning plans present a potentially rich opportunity to build community among learning plan practitioners as well as among learning plan facilitators that has not yet been realized. In Northern Virginia, learning plans are perceived by many to have taken away communities that were built among practitioners and



workshop facilitators through cluster training initiatives that were on-going for several years.

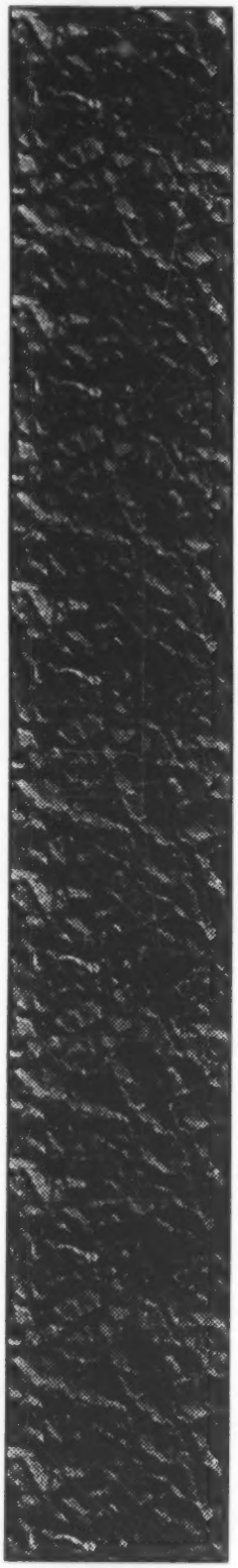
Communities of learners and collaborative groups can and should exist within individual programs and regionally across programs through study groups, learning plan discussion groups, research teams, book discussion groups and Regional Literacy Coordinating Committees. On a state-wide level, such communities can and do exist through advisory groups, special projects, workgroups, the Virginia Literacy Leadership Council and the Lead Agents Council of the Regional Literacy Coordinating Committees.

The VA staff development system through its multi-faceted approach has the capability of addressing the wide variety of learning needs represented among its practitioners. It has in place initiatives that can further promote and support communities of learners.

Practitioners want to know what impact their learning has on practice.

Learning which has an impact occurs in relation to the practice of the individual. We shared earlier the learning plan experiences of Sylvia, Valerie, Claire, and Wanda. Practitioners told us about aspects of their practice that had changed as a result of their learning. Jo, a part-time teacher, related:

> I did bring stress management in like once a week we did something having to do with their stress. Obviously, if they could see the big picture, that's a big factor in their being successful. If they can get themselves organized and eliminate as much stress as possible, they will be more successful on the GED, but it's hard for our students to see that. [Did you get any feedback from your students?] They enjoyed the handouts and the work we did on that. I think they thought it was positive.



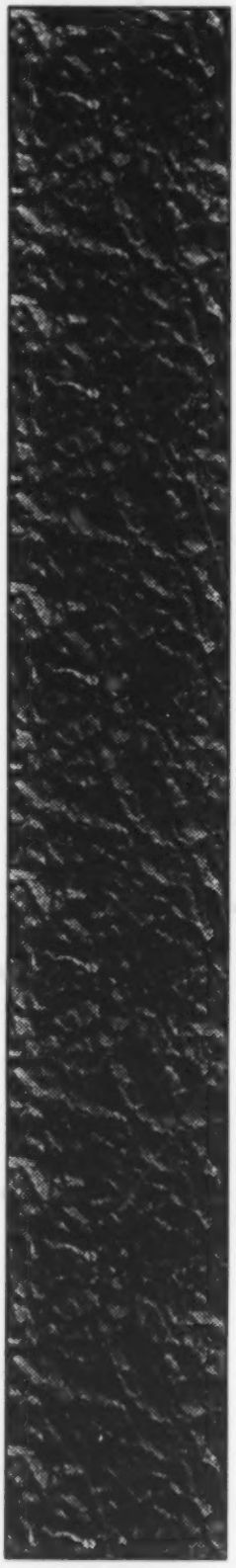
Practitioners are taking what they learn and using that knowledge in the classroom to improve and enhance instruction. Practitioners indicate that all of the current professional development components provide opportunities for teachers to learn skills and knowledge that are incorporated into instruction. Claire, referring to a REEP Northern Virginia Cluster training, shares:

> I remember back to the very first one that I attended involved a hands-on workshop in which we were divided up into teams to come up with a lesson plan. In doing that I discovered that the teamwork was an invaluable process.... I immediately glommed on that as good technique for getting them (the students) working.

Alice, speaking about her SW VAILL experience, says, "...I brought things I learned back to the classroom." However, it seems that not all administrators are confident that instruction has been improved. Ann, speaking in reference to learning plans, put it this way:

> "... it bothers me that as an administrator I don't know the successfulness of the process. I'm sure it's helping them (teachers) in their classrooms..., but I don't have anything that statistically tells me or shows me that the learning that took place that's part of the learning plan process positively affected that individual...I don't have any way to measure if the learning is transferred.

This view suggests a stance of improving the individual rather than program improvement. **We found few incidences of an explicit focus on program improvement in Virginia professional development.** Individual learners are interested in the impact of their learning and administrators speak of individual improvement; program improvement was rarely mentioned. Administrator learning plans sometimes included larger issues. Morris, an administrator, stated:



> The last one I worked on was an effort to include various literacy agencies to augment ABE programs in community colleges and GED programs, so now at our larger centers we have a literacy coordinator and tutors to work with students who are coming to us functioning below third grade level and it's sort of like a seamless operation. They go from literacy all the way up to GED and then take basic English and Math for the community college site, sort of a motivational thing, see where you are now, see where you're going, stick with it and it's working. Literacy folks are happy because now they have access to more students. The college is happy because now they can recruit students for graduation.

Valerie shares her insight that her administrator's learning plan involves a program issue that affects them all. She says, "...see your learning plan, you know it's a very gentle way, but I just realized that I think the learning plan for my coordinator is trying to make our paperwork an easier situation. So we've been working on different assessment techniques." Katherine speaks of the relationship between performance indicators, learning plans (both individual and group) and program improvement:

> We were developing our performance indicators. We wanted to show that we thought that we were a really top notch program and so in order to do that we needed to show that the teachers were interested in personal and professional growth, so that was part of the motivation... Staff development activities, preservice, inservice, but it's not specified that an individual instructor has to attend all of them, it's stated that 100% of the instructors will have learning plans...

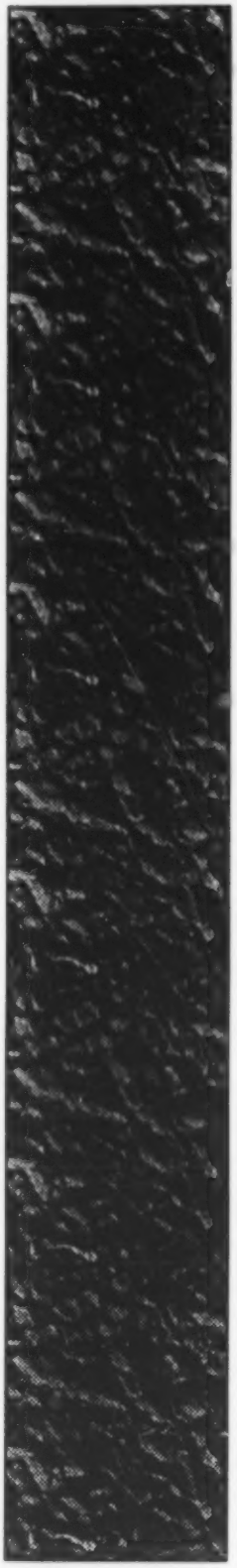
She continues to speak about group learning plans:

> I've done four or five learning plans. This year our staff did a group learning plan in anticipation of the VIEW grant and Lynchburg's component of that, and we have Woodrow Wilson and a lady from JMU now that do the tracking, the TRAC testing, and the social skills. The staff was concerned about how to motivate. I've done one on computer software, quick sheet to help teachers in the

> classroom, and have done best practices going to different sites to just see what individual sites were doing that maybe we weren't.

The Office of Adult Education, while dedicating a staff member to program improvement, links only informally through joint staff meetings with professional development initiatives in providing program improvement support to local programs. Thus, many plans are undertaken and supported for the benefit of the individual without making explicit the link and benefits to the total program. There were, however, several participants who had been involved in a REEP (Arlington Education and Employment Program) project who spoke from a different perspective. Here, Gloria, a lead teacher, reports her experience with a two-year federally funded project which led to a sense of community and enhanced the program:

> Under a national grant, REEP in Northern Virginia had the opportunity and funding to revise the curriculum used in its General ESL Program. All staff were involved in the development of the new curriculum. A team of teachers and coordinators had ultimate responsibility, but every staff member was involved in every stage of development - learner needs assessment to determine content changes, philosophical issues such as how to give adult learners more voice in their instruction, revision of level descriptions, learner assessment systems, format issues, implementation issues, etc. It was an extremely intense process that took two years with learning activities developing over time. This collaborative, community building process lead to 'measurable' individual and program improvement. Throughout the process, teachers also had their own individual learning goals which they were pursuing, but worked collaboratively on a project focusing on program improvement. By the end of the process, all teachers embraced a learner-centered approach to teaching and were able to implement a number of learner-centered needs assessment techniques to integrate learner input into instruction. Program improvement was seen in an increase in retention rates to 85% (from 76%) over a twelve-week



instructional cycle. Learners, who vote with their feet, were obviously pleased with the successful implementation of a learner-centered curriculum that gave them a strong voice in the instruction they received.

The goal of such a model is to develop a practitioner's ability to engage in program restructuring. Practitioners who participated in this on-going process valued it tremendously. Many would like to return to a system that will allow and support similar opportunities that promote both individual and program improvement. Virginia is poised to consider how its professional development system can facilitate and support similar program improvement projects around the state.

Supporting Inquiry in Practitioner Learning

Practitioners consistently identify the need for paid time to engage in learning. While the part-time status of practitioners is a local program as well as a state and national issue, there are implications for professional development. The barriers to participation in professional development of time, money and lack of information are intensified for part-time practitioners whose adult education working hours range from 2 to 38 hours per week.

Virginia does provide some incentives for participation in professional development including regional VAILLs, 800 numbers, and a variety of learning options to choose from. However, part-time teachers strongly convey a sense of frustration about not being paid to engage in staff development and learning to better do a job that is little valued and at risk of disappearing. Job insecurity tends to influence the willingness of teachers and administrators to commit time to learning. As Wanda observes:

> Funding is just so up in the air. People are saying, 'Maybe I don't want to go to VAILL even if it's free if I know I'm not working in the fall'.

Limited funding causes difficult decisions for administrators:

> ...I had the feeling we had more money from the State to help support the learning plan...and then the 7% cut one year, 22% cut - that seemed to kind of dissipate, so there was not...the same local motivation...to continue ...because now I'm asking them (the teachers) to do even more on their own time.

Practitioners want to be effective in their work. They want to work with one another to learn what will most positively influence the lives of their students. They want to be good adult educators. Yet, they consistently find themselves fighting competing demands and increasingly feel burdened by their own learning needs and the learning needs of their students. Jo's experience graphically illustrates this point:

> Sometimes the ...conference is held on days that we are also working, and if I were to attend,...I would lose my pay because I would have to miss teaching. To me that doesn't make any sense at all! Professionals should either be paid to attend these conferences if they happen to be scheduled on the same day that our classes happened to be held, or they should be scheduled at times when we would be available to come, and I think that's a major problem - major, major problem!

The part-time nature of the work exacerbates the sense of time and the resulting commitment to work and to learning. Without a sense of security, every hour seems to be counted by some as another donation. They wonder why their work is not valuable enough for a consistent full-time commitment. Ralph, an administrator, shows his understanding of the problem:

> When you look at salaries...the (school) system has addressed an increase for everybody except for folks who are working on an hourly basis. There's no increase for (them). It's got to be demoralizing.

Jo's comments further elaborate the point:

> I have a whole lot of problem spending extra time on extra things that we're not compensated for and the program doesn't allow enough time for. I'm always just overwhelmed with trying to get everything done in a short amount of time.

Rachel, speaking specifically about learning plans, concludes:

> It is the support of the learning plan (that) is lacking. And the amount of time that we are given to do the learning, like an hour a quarter. I don't think people feel that they can accomplish anything in the amount of time they are paid to do it. It is like they are asking me to do this big project in addition to what I am doing and I only get four hours of pay for the whole year.

Practitioners want reasonable compensation and recognition for the work that they do.

Practitioners consistently say that they want to learn with others.

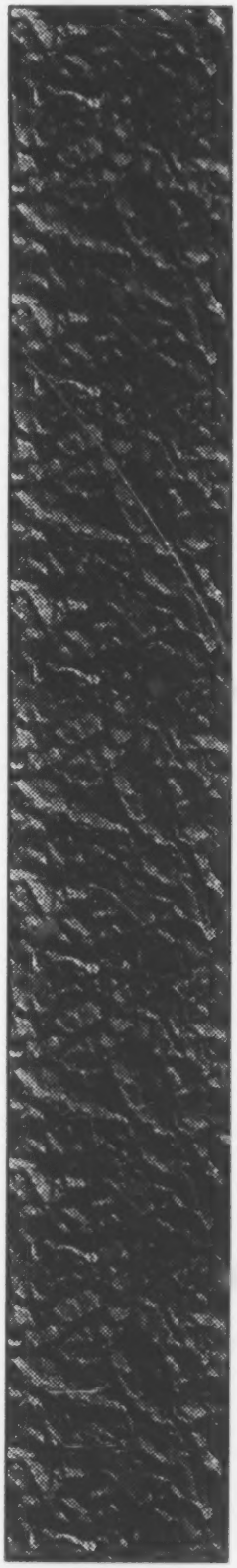
Nancy says:

> I'm sort of disappointed more people are not taking advantage of them (learning plans). I thought there would be more groups. I thought they would bring teachers together more often to talk about how their learning projects are going. From what I've heard and the invitations I didn't receive I'm guessing that did not really happen this past year.

When referring to VAILL, Lisa, a part-time teacher, explains why she attends VAILL: "In my never ending search to figure out what it is that I do I guess would be number one. I've been on the quest ever since I started with Adult Ed. Just to see people that I've met at previous conferences."

Lois states:

> I don't think I've ever come away from any conference that I'd say it wasn't any good when there's a networking opportunity to meet with my colleagues. I always learn something that's valuable and good. I find that I create



> time and opportunities whether it's planned for me or if it's not planned. It's who you sit with at the table, who's in the workshop with you.

Practitioners say that they want professional development processes to be clear and simple.

Both administrators and teachers mentioned the need for direction, clarity, and less forcing, particularly in the learning plan process. As one learning plan facilitator observes:

> ...The teacher grows and this is a benefit..., but if you've got to hammer too hard for it, it tends to be counter productive, and that's what I find to be a problem. No direction.

Another administrator points out that practitioners "don't have time to access CPD ... to get clarity, so it is important that you (the state) give them the plan as simply as you can, so they don't have hurdles."

Vera, a part-time teacher, states:

> There are those tiny, little hurdles...they'll just keep you in your classroom - in your closed world. Every little thing you don't know - the details - 'What's the form for the mileage?' and, 'Are you going to cover lunch?' causes you to put the information aside.

SUMMARY

When talking about professional development, practitioners often spoke in the language of activities and events. However, when practitioners talked about their learning, their language shifted naturally to a language of purposes, processes, and relationships. It is here in this place between learning and the activities that Virginia professional development can be found. Shifting from support of "activities" to support of "learning" asks something of every participant in the system. As learning becomes increasingly imbedded in practice, it centers on the practitioner's local context. Supporting this shift to the local

context – to creating time to talk, to question, to experiment, to write and to share what happens in programs – places external resources (workshops, conferences, classes, books, experts) in a different relationship to practice. Rather than practitioners looking to external resources for what "they know that we don't know", a program and its practitioners take a stance of asking external sources, "what do you know that helps us better understand what we know and what we are doing here?"

Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

In reporting our conclusions and recommendations, we focus on practitioner's learning within Virginia professional development looking through the lens of the ideal professional development system as articulated by Virginia's Staff Development Planning Team in *Inquiry and Action* (Drennon, 1994). These practitioner-generated characteristics are presented here as seven ideals and organized under the larger headings of access and support, community, and voice.

Access and Support

- Practitioners are at the center of staff development and have the freedom to choose what and how to learn from a variety of interconnected, accessible options.
- Information is easily and effectively communicated.
- There are incentives - including cost-related incentives and safe, risk-taking environments -for practitioners to involve themselves in staff development.

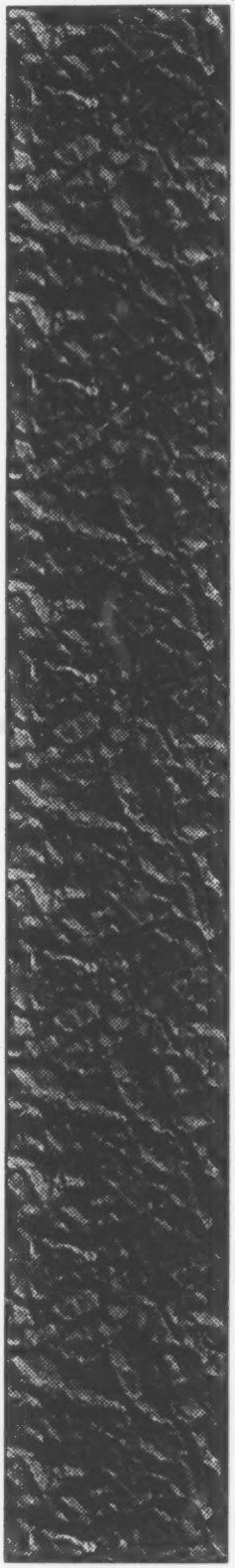
Community

- Staff development is an on-going process that encourages and supports collaboration among practitioners in all roles.
- Decisions about staff development are made within the context of larger program goals.

Voice

- Practitioners generate new knowledge within the system rather than knowledge simply being delivered.
- Practitioners actively plan, implement and evaluate all phases of staff development within the system.

Viewed through the lens of these ideals, the professional development system in Virginia has a great many strengths. Compared to 1992, the system as a whole has become more practitioner-centered and inquiry-based. It is a system that



recognizes practitioners' roles as knowledgeable experts in their classrooms. It is more comprehensive, provides a variety of staff development options to address different learning approaches, does an overall better job of communicating information to a larger segment of adult education practitioners, and for all of the above reasons, is better able to address the diverse needs of its practitioners. It is not a stagnant system; it is a dynamic system in the continuous improvement mode, which is one of its biggest strengths. Even during the course of this evaluation, changes and improvements were occurring in the individual components in response to practitioner needs. As with any system, there is room for improvement.

Shifting to a practitioner-centered system is a process that requires a shift in perspective. While this shift has come easily and naturally for some, others will need additional support through more interconnectedness of options, accessibility of options, increased incentives for participation, and more collaboration at the local level. The issue of incentives is a particularly important one for a predominantly part-time workforce.

Here we make our recommendations, revisiting the ideals of the Virginia Staff Development Planning Team as previously mentioned. Our final recommendation links the implementation of improvements together through suggested revisions to the RFP process. All recommendations are made in the spirit of continuous improvement to make a good system better.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Access and Support

Practitioners are now at the center of their learning and have increased freedom to choose what and how to learn. To a large

degree, information is easily and effectively communicated. Our recommendations for strengthening the system have to do with making professional development options more interconnected and accessible and providing more incentives for participation.

Provide greater support for learning, including additional paid time for practitioners to engage in professional development.

The issue of incentives for learning was mentioned repeatedly in the data. Being paid for participating in professional development activities was the most frequently desired and mentioned incentive.

In addition to paid time, practitioners' involvement in professional development is also influenced by other cost-related incentives and barriers. It should be noted that other types of incentives (eg. convenience, access to information, quality of the learning experience, and acknowledgment of learning) were also frequently mentioned and will be dealt with directly in other sections.

Cost-related factors that influence participation include:

- released time for travel and participation
- free training
- receiving university credits or recertification points
- being paid for transportation costs
- free or low cost accommodations
- job security
- little or no paperwork involved
- 800 numbers

We recommend that existing incentives be maintained and strengthened. Currently, in addition to state-supported incentives, it is recommended that CPD work with local programs and individual practitioners to assess and strengthen incentives

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at the program level. The Massachusetts Department of Education currently recommends and funds part-time practitioners a minimum of 15 hours per year or 2.5% of employment hours, and full-time practitioners 50 paid hours to participate in professional development.

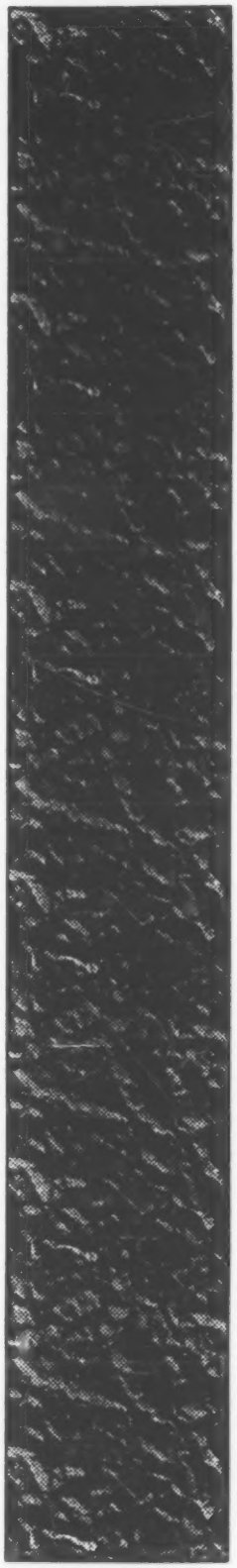
Currently, Virginia guidelines recommend adult educators receive 10 hours of paid professional development time. In actuality, average paid staff development time has been consistently 6 hours per year for the past 3 years. In addition, each program that participates in learning plans is allocated a sum equal to $20.00 per eligible participant to be used to support practitioner learning.

While not an easy problem to solve, the success of individual, program, and system development ultimately rests with the solution. And it is the responsibility of individuals, programs, and the system to ensure that a solution is found.

Make information and professional development options even more accessible.

While great strides have been made in this area and readily available information and convenience were mentioned as existing incentives to participation, information access could be enhanced through:

- Stronger technological links (eg. an electronic calendar of events, distance learning options, e-mail and moderated listservs, teleconferences, satellite courses, etc.)
- Virginia professional development video library, including:
    - a video to help practitioners visualize the system better and connect faces and places to staff development activities.



- a video on learning plans similar to the *Inquiry in Action* video in that the philosophy of inquiry-based learning is presented and practitioners share their experiences, but less research-oriented and more nuts and bolts. Such a video could help clarify misconceptions about learning plans and address the issue of needing to integrate new teachers to the process throughout the year.

- video tapes from trainings and workshops that have been presented in Virginia .

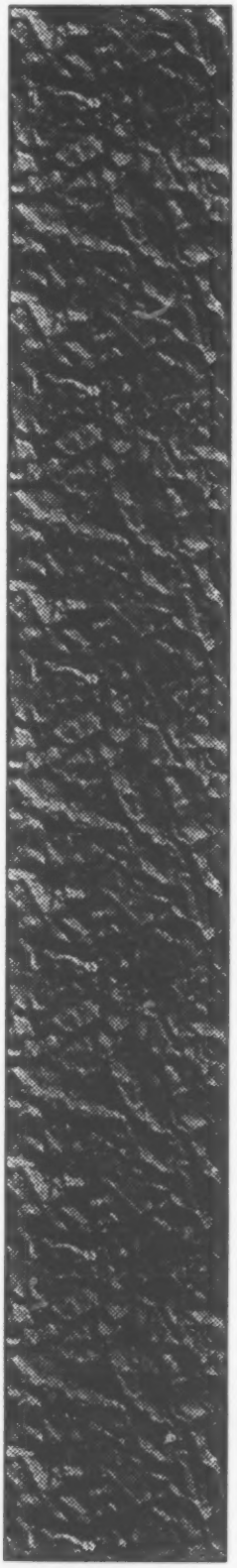
Videos could be loaned out to programs and individuals or featured through bookmobiles. Instructions on how to get the video could be included in the New Instructor Starter Kit.

Virginia professional development videos would enhance learning opportunities for practitioners who have time and travel restrictions and for those who prefer this mode of learning. In addition, by featuring Virginia practitioners, the video library would provide a vehicle for sharing and recognizing practitioner knowledge. Videos on learning plans and the professional development system could also help to provide a more consistent understanding of processes and systems.

Develop a Regional System to bring professional development closer to the program and the practitioner.

Regional support systems can provide more access to professional development opportunities, provide more support to new teachers, and offer practitioners opportunities to build networks of learners who come together to share knowledge and develop skills.

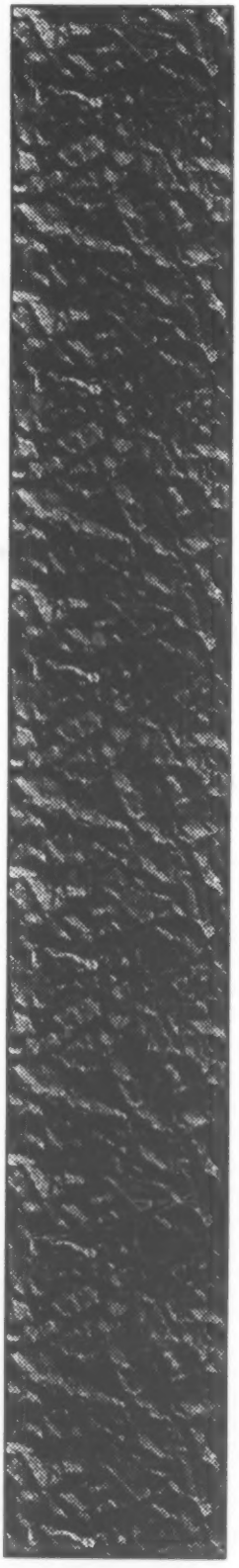
The current centralized model draws narrowly on the possibilities that could be undertaken at the local level. Currently, CPD staff are working at capacity with one person in



charge of administering workshops and meetings for the whole state and one person in charge of administering learning plans for the entire state. In some instances, the supported workshops are gatherings of teachers to share their learning plans or plan for their program. Most are episodic, presentation-focused workshops in the expert model, although with the expert increasingly being a local, regional or state practitioner. The value of the gathering together is undisputed by practitioners of all types and levels of experience. So too, the value of the information shared may be significant. However, there is little evidence that the gatherings are related to either practitioner learning goals as stated in their learning plans or programmatic goals as articulated in performance indicators.

Specifically with regards to learning plans, a centralized system makes it more difficult to implement strong systems of feedback to practitioners, to acknowledge individual learning, and to disseminate practitioner knowledge. It is also difficult to ensure consistency with regard to how learning plans are introduced and managed at the local level. Through regionalization, more can be done to take advantage of learning potential through workshops and learning plans to assure that more individuals and programs participate, that participation is more meaningful, and that individual and program development are more closely linked.

By recommending a regional approach to professional development, we reiterate recommendations made previously in *Teachers Learning* (1992) and *Inquiry and Action* (1994). Thus, we recommend the formation of at least five regional professional development centers, each governed by a professional development coordinating committee (PDCC). Each center would have a regional coordinator, who would receive a

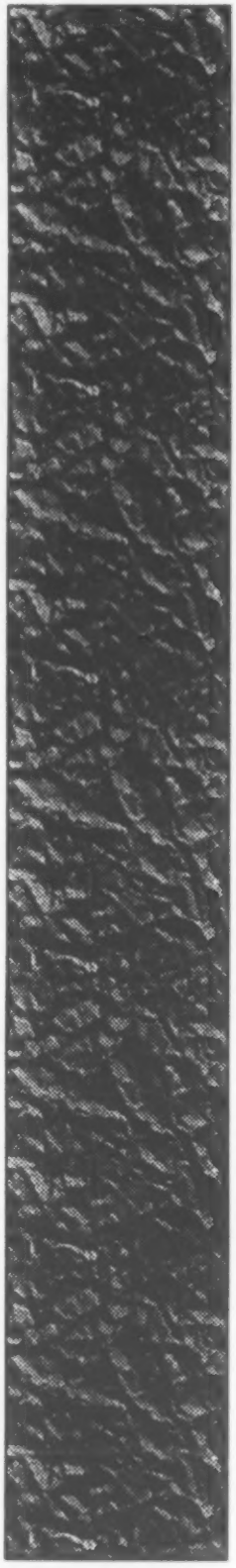


half-time stipend which could be combined with other responsibilities to create a full-time position. [An alternative to the regional coordinator position in urban areas (Richmond, Northern Virginia, and Virginia Beach areas) would be a regional specialist position which will be further discussed in the next recommendation.] Each center would report directly to CPD. Local programs may want to apply to be regional centers with a current staff member assuming the responsibilities of regional coordinator. Therefore, the RFP process will need to ensure that the needs of all programs in a region are met through the provision of collaboration, whereby one program may apply but letters of agreement must be signed by all programs in the area.

The regional sites ought to be accessible and familiar to adult educators in that region. The sites would serve the surrounding Regional Literacy Coordinating Committee (RLCC) areas, having at least one representative from each RLCC serving on the PDCC. We envision the PDCC to be largely teacher representatives, program planners, specialists and program administrators of both public and private providers. Representation of part-time teachers on the PDCC would be crucial and would require appropriate compensation for teachers.

In addition, these committees could serve as the advisory committees for the existing Summer Institutes (VAILL) in their area, providing more interconnectedness and linking the on-going development needs of practitioners more directly to the summer institutes. Each center could coordinate or support in planning an Institute, either summer or topical, as requested by the RFP.

In addition to providing greater access and support for professional development, a regional approach would provide

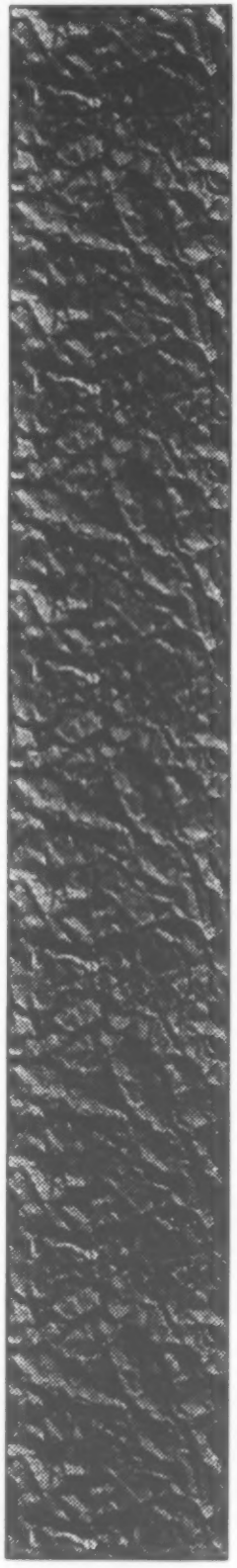


more opportunities for practitioners' knowledge to be valued, shared, and used in regional professional development planning. Regional professional development coordinators could support learning plan facilitators in facilitating the learning plan process, both individual learning plans and groups of practitioners working together on questions of mutual interest (learning projects).

Increased support for new teachers is another area where regional support is crucial. Claire sums up the need: "...Other people come in from a credential course with no teaching experience. I suspect for them what might be more helpful would be a mentor assisting them or the opportunity to be mentored or to observe because a new teacher's knees are knocking so hard that students can hear the castanets." Regional centers, supported by CPD, could be responsible for enhancing the transition into the system of new teachers.

This and similar regional initiatives would help to build communities of learners (rebuild in the case of Northern Virginia practitioners) and reduce isolation. Regionally facilitated learning plans could also reduce other barriers to participation and learning. There would be greater communication, feedback, and acknowledgment of individual learning through more human resources and geographical convenience. Practitioners would not have the feeling that once they submit a learning plan nothing happens to it. A regional professional development coordinator would also better provide on-going support for local learning plan facilitators.

Practitioners are at the heart of the regional initiative as planners, through committee participation, as presenters, materials developers and through needs assessment. With a consistent design that builds in time for practitioner sharing both



formally and informally, this approach would generate both practitioner and facilitator networks.

Link state level professional development more closely with existing urban area activities and resources.

Virginia professional development has shifted its focus to a learner-centered, inquiry-based system of professional development, consistent with the current view of literacy learning. Our practitioners have knowledge upon on which they build to enhance their practice. We found a stronger link between state professional development and rural practitioners than urban practitioners. While there is some interaction between CPD and urban programs, the linkages are less pronounced than with rural programs. We recommend linking existing resources in urban programs (e.g., Northern Virginia, Virginia Beach, and Richmond areas) more directly with the Centers for Professional Development by encouraging these areas to apply as regional professional development sites, each with a half time regional professional development coordinator or regional specialist. In the case of Richmond, we recommend a more concerted effort on the part of CPD staff to reach out to the greater Richmond area programs to better link them with the services of professional development and one another.

Impact of a Regional Approach on the Current Professional Development System

A regional approach to professional development would bring some changes to existing components in Virginia's professional development system. Here, we review the functions of the regional professional development centers and then detail the

impact establishing regional centers would have on the existing staff development components.

Regional Professional Development Centers. Regional centers would bring the professional development process to the local level, focusing on learning plans, learning projects and practitioner research, materials development, and needs-based workshops. This emphasis would provide the necessary feedback requested by practitioners to make learning plans more meaningful. In further explaining regional professional development centers, we draw directly from *Inquiry and Action* (1994).

> Regional professional development centers can promote collaboration among practitioners, enhance support, diminish isolation, and increase the available options for professional learning. Regional professional development centers can:
>
> - Serve as sites for professional development activities as well as provide a base of operations for a "roving" staff developer;
> - Provide a meeting place and centralized training site;
> - House limited resource materials; and
> - Serve as a satellite of the state Resource Center.
>
> (Drennon, 1994, p. 16)

Regional professional development centers would serve their regions in all aspects, but could potentially serve the whole state by specializing in one area, for example on ESL, workforce development, citizenship, family literacy, leadership development or credentialing. A focused mission could enhance collaboration and facilitate funding from other sources as well as generate knowledge and support for the entire state.

In addition, we envision each center and its Professional Development Coordinating Committee (PDCC) offering or supporting an Institute, either one of the current summer institutes or a topical institute, as determined by needs

expressed in learning plans, learning projects and action research in that region and state initiatives.

The regional professional development coordinator would work closely with local program planners, administrators, specialists and the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers to:

- Conduct regional needs assessment on an on-going basis.
- Assist local programs in supporting new teachers through a mentoring network.
- Support learning plan facilitators in their work with individual and group learning plans.
- Link practitioner learning with larger program, regional performance indicators and development plans.
- Promote study groups and sharing sessions.
- Provide assistance to individual as well as groups of practitioners pursuing action research projects.
- Coordinate regional workshops.
- Maintain a website.
- Provide information to the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Network (VAELN) listserv, and other electronic connections as they develop.
- Convene the Regional Professional Development Coordinating Committee.
- Assist with annual practitioner-centered Institute.
- Contribute regional news to the PROGRESS newsletter and eventually publish regional newsletters.
- Disseminate information about state and local professional development opportunities.

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Institutes (VAILLs): To promote professional development as an on-going, continuing process that values practitioner knowledge and brings learning closer to the local level, we envision two additional institutes offered in collaboration with the newly established regional professional development centers. Currently, 600 Virginia practitioners attend one of the three VAILLs; an additional two institutes could serve more practitioners.

The new institutes would respond to expressed needs, could be in-depth and topical in nature and scheduled at a time convenient to practitioners in the region. Further, the Regional Professional Development Coordinating Committee would serve as the advisory group for that region's institute.

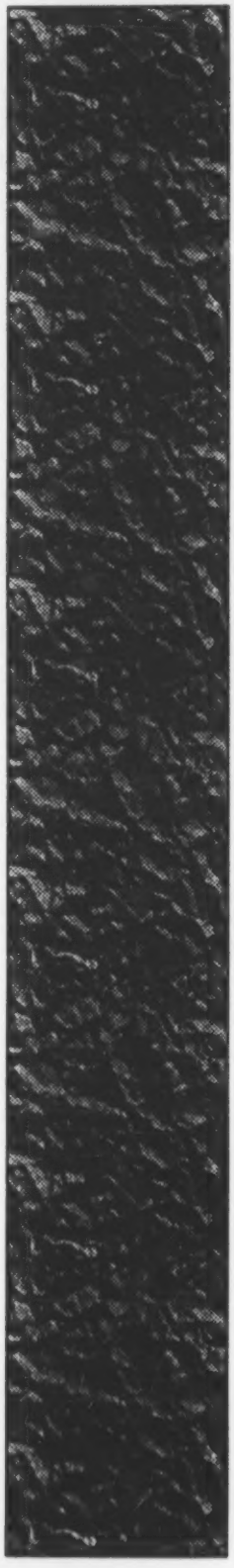
While maintaining the integrity and flavor of each individual VAILL and institute, there needs to be more consistency, particularly with regard to conference evaluation and promoting an inquiry-based philosophy that values practitioner knowledge. It is recommended that the ESL VAILL evaluation forms, particularly the six week follow up evaluation, be considered as a model to develop a common evaluation form for all VAILLs and institutes.

In addition to using Virginia practitioners as workshop facilitators, other vehicles for sharing and recognizing practitioner knowledge need to be implemented. Such vehicles could include: more sessions related to learning plans, videotaping sessions for inclusion in the Virginia Professional Development video library, including poster sessions that exhibit practitioner work, instituting a practitioner booth with practitioner-generated materials, and ensuring that practitioner-developed materials are "featured" in the Resource Center booth.

The Adult Educator's Research Network: In this regional model, the activities of the Research Network would continue but be brought directly under Virginia Adult Education & Literacy Centers in order to better integrate professional development services and further promote practitioner research. Research-related activities would move to CPD and eventually to the regional centers, supported by CPD. The publishing activity of the Network would move to and be expanded by the Resource Center. The Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers must dedicate qualified personnel to continue to lead the processes initiated by the Research Network in concert with the newly established network of regional centers.

The Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers: In this regional model, each of the newly established regional centers might be identified by a common name and logo with a regional distinction, for example, Adult Education and Literacy Center: Southwest or Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Center at ____. This would provide a local connection and yet a consistent statewide identity. This approach would adjust responsibilities, shifting the focus of Adult Education and Literacy Centers in Richmond to leadership development, coordination, publishing and dissemination of adult education knowledge and materials placing emphasis on the work of Virginia practitioners.

Centers for Professional Development: Under this model, CPD would take the leadership role in infusing inquiry and research practices throughout Virginia professional development. We envision the Centers focusing on leadership development among current and future learning plan/professional development facilitators, working in concert with the Regional Professional Development Centers and their



coordinating committees. It is imperative that the commitment to practitioner research and networking be maintained and enhanced. It is here where transformation of practice is most effectively achieved.

We make the following recommendations with regard to CPD's function in infusing inquiry-based and research practices throughout the state:

- continue the annual Research Symposium, possibly as regional symposia in concert with the regional centers.

- re-establish links between Virginia adult educators and higher education practitioners in a way that each can share knowledge and learn together. One possibility includes reinstituting the Research Colloquy to bring together practitioners from adult and higher education to examine common issues and generate questions which could result in collaborative research projects.

- provide a support system for adult education programs to offer teaching practicum opportunities for students enrolled in university education programs. Currently, this is rarely done due to time and money constraints for adult education programs to respond to requests for teaching practicums. Yet, in addition to better preparing teachers-in-training to enter the teaching field and thereby improving the delivery system, mentoring a practicum student provides a rich professional development option for adult education teachers and programs. Adult educators would need to be compensated appropriately for their time and effort, perhaps partly through local funds, the Virginia professional development system, and partly through university contributions.

- explore and strengthen ways in which adult educators can earn university credit for learning such as practitioner research projects, as well as their course-based learning.

The Resource Center. The Resource Center would incorporate into its current mission an emphasis on publishing including, bringing together practitioners to edit and produce the bi-annual *Adult Education Reader*, the *Summer Reading List*, *The Practitioner Research Year in Review* and the recommended *Learning Plan Year in Review*. In time, each of these might be produced through the regional professional development centers creating more opportunities for involvement and more resources for adult educators to use. These materials could serve as the foundation for regional and statewide gatherings to talk and reflect on the implications for programs and practice. In addition, the Resource Center would serve as a coordinating center for the regional resource centers.

PROGRESS: In this regional model, PROGRESS would remain largely the same. However, using PROGRESS as a learning plan communication and feedback vehicle should be seriously explored. Other features such as a tutor tips column and editorial page would create further opportunities for sharing. Regional coordinators would be responsible for submitting regional news and initiatives for publication, as CPD does now for the state level. In time, PROGRESS might also be produced regionally and more frequently.

Community

The current professional development system encourages and supports collaboration among practitioners through project advisory boards, regional VAILLs, Baseline Instructor Training, 353 projects such as this evaluation study, Resource Center Associates program, and group projects undertaken through the Research Network. This section provides recommendations that would further strengthen communities of learners.

Develop communities of practitioners through the learning plan process.

According to Drennon's (1994) vision of inquiry-based staff development in Virginia, "...groups of practitioners develop inquiry projects with the guidance of locally trained staff development facilitators." However, our data show little evidence of such groups. While practitioners express desire to work together, learning plans are viewed by many practitioners as fiercely independent activities that have resulted in increased feelings of isolation. Therefore, we recommend that the learning plan process be better supported through the facilitation and encouragement of group learning plans, study groups, book discussions, and other collaborative endeavors. This support should also include increased incentives for participation, particularly paid time.

We recommend using existing communities such as Baseline Trainers, Resource Center Associates, Learning Plan Facilitators, and possibly work groups to further the notion of learning plans becoming a vehicle to capture the learning process and not an end in themselves.

Provide more support for learning plan facilitators and in the future to regional professional development coordinators.

Learning plan facilitators represent a wide variety of practitioner types who also serve as conduits to professional development, but again the nature and degree of participation varies. While learning plan facilitators come together annually, we found little evidence of consistent support of their efforts to facilitate a learning plan process. In the current understaffed,

centralized model not enough is being done to recognize and support the learning plan process. A community of learning plan facilitators, supported by CPD, is needed to work together on leadership issues such as how to better support practitioners initially in selecting a topic, how to emphasize the learning process while de-emphasizing the paperwork, how to encourage learning over time, how to link learning plans to program improvement, and how to share and disseminate the knowledge that is generated from the efforts of practitioners and their learning plan facilitators. Additional support mechanisms, such as stipends, need to be seriously considered for supporting larger topics undertaken alone or with others over a longer period of time.

Provide the conduits of professional development (specialists, lead teachers, planners, and administrators) with on-going opportunities to come together to develop and reflect upon their leadership and facilitation skills in inquiry-based practices.

Currently, professional development is not implemented uniformly throughout the state. Regional specialists, lead teachers, program planners, and administrators influence the likelihood that programs and individuals participate in staff development. However, the nature and degree of participation varies. Bringing these individuals together, over time, to focus on their leadership role in Virginia professional development should be a focus of the Centers for Professional Development. Specifically, we recommend opportunities to share and learn organizational skills, interpersonal skills, practitioner-centered approaches to management and program improvement, inquiry-based approaches, and strategies for increasing participation in staff development. Again, the issue of incentives and

motivational factors will need to be addressed with particular focus on this group's needs.

A major obstacle in addressing this need is the current infrastructure of predominantly part-time, local administrators. The regional planner concept has successfully addressed this issue in some areas and should be explored for further expansion. Simultaneously, administrators, et al, should be encouraged through directed retreats to reflect on their current learning practices and how they relate in an inquiry-based system. In addition, these conduits should be active in mentoring one another in effective practices for program improvement and professional development, both their own and that of those with whom they work.

Establish Regional Professional Development Planning Committees to serve as the advisory group for regional professional development and Institutes.

This committee should be made up of a representative group of practitioners, including full and part-time teachers, volunteers, tutors, administrators, planners, and specialists from all constituencies - ABE, ESL, corrections, family literacy, workplace literacy, etc. The group should also include practitioners new to Virginia adult education as well as established practitioners. A rotation of committee members is advised.

As recommended under the proposal for regional professional development centers, planning committees would constitute another community of learners, in this case to plan regional professional development and Institutes. Additionally, incentives for participation on these committees need to be explored.

Establish a means to further develop and share leadership in inquiry-based practices for practitioners throughout the Commonwealth.

Shifting toward an inquiry stance in professional development takes time, reflection, support, and feedback. Virginia is in the midst of such a shift. An Institute on inquiry-based learning would be helpful in meeting the needs of experienced adult education practitioners, in supporting community building, and initiating group inquiry projects and community building. Deliberate opportunities to attend to the issues of inquiry would facilitate understanding and may accelerate change. At the very least, such a focus reminds people of current efforts, allowing for collective discussion, assessment, and learning.

Institutionalize the opportunity for annual thematic practitioner research projects to explore significant topics and make recommendations for action. Link projects to multi-state and/or national initiatives, when appropriate.

This 353 project evaluating staff development presents an excellent model for on-going practitioner research and recommendations on important issues in adult education. Through an RFP process, practitioner teams could be contracted to research issues and recommend appropriate courses of action. In some instances, a cycle might be initiated where the status of the issue is revisited every five years. Future issues for exploration could include professionalization of the adult education workforce, regional/program intake and assessment, technology, program best practices, learning disabilities, etc. In determining topics for such projects, program

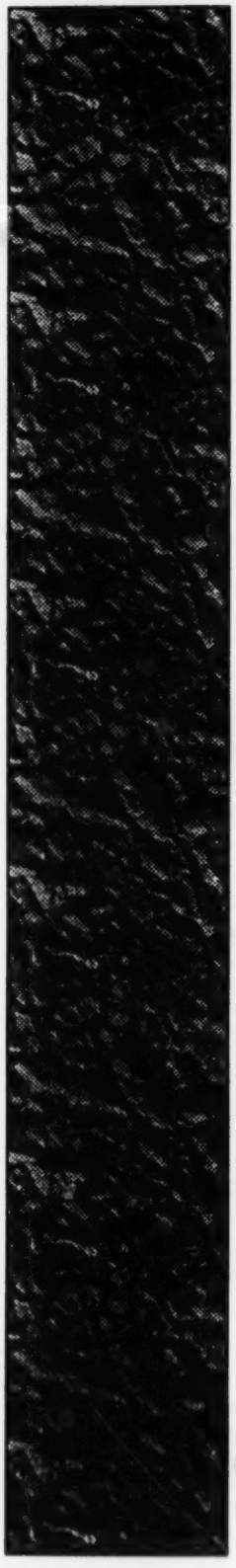
needs and links to national initiatives should be considered. One current national research initiative that could have a statewide focus is determining indicators that participation in staff development results in changed classroom performance and ultimately program improvement.

It is important that these groups be given adequate support, including leadership, clear expectations, and a reasonable amount of compensation and time to do their work. The experiences and expertise of previous groups, such as the Staff Development Planning Team of 30, the Northern VA Cluster Training Group, the Research Network practitioner researchers, and this project's evaluation team, should be used as a foundation for future groups.

Link learning, practice, and program improvement through a continuous improvement philosophy and process.

We recommend that Virginia professional development focus both on individual improvement as well as program improvement. We envision a system in which each practitioner learns, analyzes results, and contributes to program improvement. Individual improvement and program improvement should be linked more explicitly in performance indicators, measures, and standards whereby all practitioners in a program are involved in program issues, such as student recruitment and retention, educational gains, curriculum and instruction, program planning, and professional development.

Individual practitioners could in addition enhance their own skills through participation in the state's various professional development options, eg. learning plans and other inquiry activities, study groups, presentations/attendance at workshops

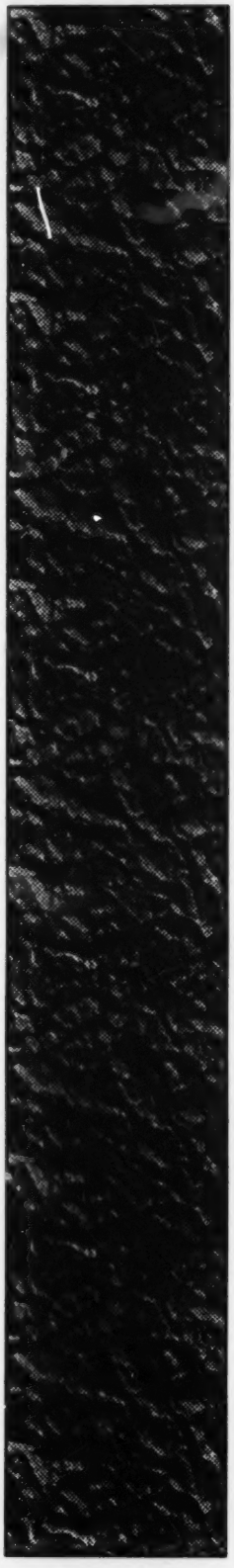


and conferences, publishing, etc. The knowledge that individuals and programs create would be shared, disseminated, and contribute to system improvement and to the field.

At the state level, policy developers with the input of practitioners must create a comprehensive state professional development plan to ensure a shared understanding, consistency of purpose, and expected outcomes. Articulation of meaningful performance standards is essential. In addition, local programs must be held accountable for performance with both incentives for achievement and sanctions for noncompliance. At all levels, there must be a concerted effort to link professional development to program improvement, with incentives for doing so and sanctions if evidence does not reflect such an approach. Program development plans must include evidence of collective and individual efforts to achieve results through systematic planning, data gathering, and adjustment for continuous improvement.

Voice

As a result of the change to an inquiry-based system, a significant shift has occurred in how knowledge is created in Virginia. Knowledge is no longer simply delivered. Through individual learning plans, special projects, publications, research, etc., Virginia practitioners generate new knowledge that is valuable to adult educators in Virginia and beyond. However, we make the following recommendations for more widely sharing that knowledge, acknowledging practitioners' learning, and more actively involving practitioners in planning, implementing, and evaluating all phases of professional development in order to have an even greater voice in their professional development system.



Disseminate more broadly the work of Virginia practitioners.

We recommend that a comprehensive system for disseminating the work of Virginia practitioners be implemented. CPD needs to take leadership in developing and implementing a system, with particular emphasis on learning plan dissemination and considering the following recommendation in the development of the system. We recommend that:

- The Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers coordinate the publication and dissemination of practitioner knowledge. Currently, the Research Network serves as the major publisher of Virginia practitioner work through its *Year in Review*, research reports (e.g., *Cyber This Cyber That*, Cockley, 1996), *Adult Education Reader* and the *Summer Reading List*. We are recommending that these efforts be incorporated into the Virginia Resource Center and expanded to include publication of *A Learning Plan Year in Review*.

- VAILLs and Institutes focus more on disseminating the work of Virginia practitioners. In addition to presentations, consider displays, poster sessions, round tables.

- The knowledge generated through learning plans is disseminated and utilized in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of all other projects.

- The RFP proposals focus more on practitioner sharing. We suggest that 353 RFPs, including future proposals for regional professional development centers, require proposals to demonstrate how the projects will share practitioner knowledge within their project, within the system, and with the field of adult education. Projects would also need to demonstrate how they will provide incentives for practitioners to share their knowledge, eg. stipends for VAILL presenters, PROGRESS publications, etc.

- An electronic resource system be developed. Such a

resource system would capture all that is learned from practitioner learning plans and other inquiries and make that information accessible to all practitioners.

Improve the status and working conditions of adult educators and adult education.

Professional development in Virginia has progressed over the past five years to better reflect what we know about literacy learning. The state delivery system as well as individual programs must also move in this direction. A system that cannot support an empowered workforce will lose access to that workforce in terms of non-participation in professional development and in the loss of talented professionals in whom the state and local programs have already invested valuable professional development dollars. Individuals, programs, and the state must work together to create more professional positions that will not only advance individuals but their programs, the state system, and the field as a whole.

Part-time practitioners repeatedly expressed this in the data. As one part-time teacher put it: "...I would love to be able to do this as a real job..." Another part-time practitioner says: "...I am beginning to get to the point where I am down because I've been wanting a full-time job for some time and don't want to jump through a lot of hoops trying to do as much as I can where I'm needed and nothing ever pans out. I'm starting to look away from adult education now ..." Another practitioner states it this way: "...I like adult education, but I don't want to continue to be closed out from all the benefits, have to worry and have to not know indefinitely from year to year what's going to happen."

Administrators also express the need to increase the status and working conditions of adult educators. As one administrator

put it: "We need to be able to demand certain credentials to teach... On the other hand, when you demand those, you also have to pay, to give people benefits, full-time positions..." A project director reflects on learning plans: "When you're a part time employee, it's hard to frame anything, so it isn't an add on. Staff development is definitely an add on. The learning plan...is an add on. 'It's just another piece of paper.' I don't know how many times I heard that. I thought ...about how could we make it so that it was more organic to what they did, more integral, but until people are full time, I don't see how it can be."

The state and programs will need to fashion more real jobs (full-time jobs with benefits as well as part-time jobs with security and benefits). Individual teachers will need to position themselves to compete for these jobs, partly through increased involvement in professional development that demonstrates improved practice.

RFP PROCESS

The implementation of the above recommendations to strengthen access, support, community, and voice would create a continuous improvement system that links learning, practice, and program improvement. In order to ensure that strengthening process, we make one final recommendation regarding RFPs.

The 353 Call for Proposals should explicitly state the philosophy of practitioner-centered, inquiry-based professional development and require proposals to demonstrate how a particular project will support inquiry-based learning. In addition, the proposals should demonstrate how projects will strengthen practitioners' access, support, community, and voice within the system.

Specifically, proposals should demonstrate:

- how inquiry learning will be supported through projects
- how directors, particularly Institute Directors, will collaborate with each other in planning, implementation, and evaluation
- how projects will involve all practitioners types (teachers, volunteers, staff development leaders, administrators in the above aspects of the projects to facilitate links between learning, practice, and programs and facilitate a continuous improvement system
- how opportunities for networking/developing communities of learners will be provided
- how the knowledge generated by practitioners will be shared and recognized
- how projects will provide incentives for practitioner involvement and knowledge sharing
- how projects will address the variety of needs among Virginia practitioners
- how information will be communicated to practitioners
- how linkages between learning, practice, and program improvement will be supported through projects

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

Each of the professional development components continues to evolve, even as this evaluation is being conducted. Change continues and will continue incrementally over time. Some of the previously mentioned recommendations could be foreseen and are underway. Others will take time and investment. It is important to note that in both our observations and data, all projects appeared to be working at full capacity. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to maintain the current level

of services while implementing recommendations. The evaluation team is aware of the magnitude of the recommendations in this paper and therefore, in the following section presents priorities for certain recommendation and proposes a phase-in of other recommendations.

Given budget limitations, we recommend these priorities:

1. Develop a policy and appropriate funding to pay practitioners for engaging in meaningful ongoing professional development activities and

2. Provide the necessary leadership to ensure that the opportunity for inquiry flourishes throughout Virginia. Inquiry needs the leadership currently provided by the CPD, Resource Center, and Research Network. The proposed regional centers cannot replace existing efforts. Rather, they are to extend to the field additional opportunities for practitioner-centered learning. Their success is dependent upon the development of leaders who understand the importance of support, access, community, and voice in facilitating professional development. We expect the coordination and leadership training of regional professional development coordinators to be an important, ongoing responsibility of the Centers for Professional Development.

In 1997-1998, we suggest:

- Exploring implementation of this report's recommendations, particularly incentives for participation in professional development for part-time teachers, through a group process involving representative practitioners including part-time teachers, representation from the Virginia Adult Education Office, and the VA Adult Education and Literacy Centers.

- Revising the 353 project requests for proposal in the areas mentioned in final recommendation.

- Restructuring the learning plan process to bring it in line with the principles presented in *Inquiry in Action* and to address the concerns raised by Virginia practitioners. In concert with

learning plan facilitators, initiate a process to rejuvenate interest and enthusiasm.

- Through the Adult Education and Literacy Centers, establishing an on-going leadership development program for learning plan and professional development facilitators.

1998-1999 and Beyond:

- Shifting Research Network activities to the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Centers and eventually to Regional Centers.

- Moving to a regional approach to professional development through an RFP requesting the formation of a regional professional development center which also may host/coordinate a summer Institute in that area, thus creating a minimum of three professional development centers.

- Linking urban area professional development to Virginia professional development through a regional specialist or regional professional development coordinator for the Northern Virginia area and the Beach areas.

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EACH COMPONENT

VAILL

- Develop customized in depth session for experienced teachers that includes some continuity from year to year. Perhaps this could be the beginning of an inquiry group "For experienced teachers only."
- Standard evaluation for all VAILLs - perhaps analyzed both individually and compared across all three VAILLs.
- Increased opportunities for practitioner sharing.

PROGRESS

- Continue to use PROGRESS as a way to share practitioner's stories - include adult learners' stories as well.
- Have an editorial page for feedback to articles and ongoing dialog.
- Include a tutor tip in each issue - often these can easily be adapted to ABE classes.

- Publish more frequently.
- Provide a vehicle for learning plan communication.

RESOURCE CENTERS

- Continue electronic linkages.
- Continue to bring material out to the field.
- Collect and promote practitioner and learner texts.
- Work toward simultaneously increasing the technological capabilities and expertise of the field.
- Create and maintain a video library of popular trainings and workshops.
- Publish and disseminate practitioner-generated knowledge.
- Begin planning for regional centers.

CPD

- Examine what is being collected from practitioners regarding learning plans and for what purpose. Create a system which collects meaningful practitioner stories about their learning - beyond a form about what they plan to do.
- Develop leadership and facilitation skills for professional development facilitators.
- Provide more feedback in learning plan process.
- Explicitly and prominently display professional development philosophy in publications and at functions.
- Develop a video on learning plans.
- Encourage communities to develop around popular learning plan topics and/or program needs.
- Create a common logo for all professional development components.
- Coordinate Regional PD Centers.
- Conduct annual research symposium highlighting practitioner researchers and their work.
- Develop and implement an institute on inquiry-based techniques and procedures.
- Begin planning for regional centers.

RESEARCH NETWORK (responsibilities will be phased into regional centers and Resource Center)

- Coordinate with VAILLs to begin a group inquiry project each year that will be presented at the next VAILL the following year.
- More widely disseminate publications - perhaps use subscriptions and mail directly to homes.

- Support regional inter-program and across program inquiry groups.
- Link with multi-state and national initiatives.
- Create a directory of articles published in all publications.
- Reinstate colloquy to link with universities for joint projects and also to arrange for graduate credit for practitioners engaged in research projects if they desire it.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE ADULT EDUCATION OFFICE

- Provide greater support for learning by increasing paid time for professional development.

- Improve status and working conditions of adult educators, emphasizing full-time positions with benefits as well as part-time positions with security and benefits.

- Link program improvement to professional development by implementing a team approach to support program goals.

- Refine the RFP process to reflect the philosophy of practitioner centered, inquiry professional development.

- Continue to set clear expectations for State Professional Development Director(s) in the state professional development plan and professional development initiatives to ensure a shared understanding, consistency of purpose, and expected outcomes.

- Explicitly link program improvement to professional development in all state initiatives.

- Provide direction and incentives for program participation in continuous improvement processes.

CONCLUSION

The title of our report "We are Now in the Driver's Seat" was taken from our data as it exemplifies both where many practitioners see their relationship to the Virginia professional development system at this point in time and the nature of this

evaluation project. For many of the voices in our data, the awareness of a change was evident.

The existence of this report, a practitioner-designed participatory evaluation, is a testament to the strong trust and support Virginia gives to inquiry-based group projects. Here's how a team member describes her experience: "It was just what I needed. I was rejuvenated by learning in areas that were new to me: qualitative research, computer literacy, the components of the state staff development system, the camaraderie of working with seven other people from diverse positions in adult education. It was new, it was challenging, and it expanded my awareness."

Other practitioners are not so sure it's just what they need. Here is the voice of the practitioner who gave us our title: "It (the learning plan) can be an empowering tool, and I'm sure that was part of the philosophy - that individually, we are now in the driver's seat for our staff development, and we're not going to be spoon-fed what they think we need. But we are part-time. We work evenings. We can't come home from a 5 o'clock job and spend an evening working on a project like this. So maybe, given that part of our profession, it's just not a good tool for our ...schedules." This teacher dramatically voices the transition from a traditional (spoon fed) system of Professional Development to an inquiry model (in the drivers' seat). She describes the challenges of inquiry for a part-time professional.

The Virginia Professional Development System as well as the larger Adult Education System must continue to balance the needs of part-time professionals and professional development initiatives. This practitioner probably never wanted to be spoon fed; however, the driver's seat will not be comfortable without additional support. We are once again reminded that the

process of change is slow and incremental. Brookfield puts it this way:

> Wrenching ourselves out of habitual ways of interpreting our practice, and learning new ways of acting that correspond to new ways of seeing are difficult, tiring, and piecemeal tasks. ...As teachers speak about how they experience change in their own lives, they describe a rhythm of learning that might be called "incremental fluctuation." Put colloquially, this rhythm can be understood as one where the learner takes two steps forward and one step back, followed by four steps forward and one step back, ... and so on in a series of irregular fluctuations marked by overall progress. (1995, p. 242)

This could be used to describe the progress of Virginia practitioners and the Virginia Professional Development System. It has evolved over the past five years in response to the needs of practitioners as articulated in previous works by practitioners: *Teachers Learning* (1992) and *Inquiry and Action* (1994). However, it is not an easy, smooth journey, but rather one of "incremental fluctuation." Brookfield goes on to say that learners are tempted to give in when they find themselves going backwards and repeating old habits. This must not be the response of Virginia practitioners; rather, we must continue to move forward in both vision and action to support practitioner learning through inquiry, recognizing that it is meaningful, valuable, and not without difficulty.

APPENDIX A

ABOUT OUR TEAM

Sarah Dilley is employed by Henrico County Public Schools. In addition to coordinating the Evening High School Credit Program, she is currently an ABE-GED teacher and an External Diploma Program advisor-assessor. She assists in coordinating some workplace programs and is also a qualified Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Instructor.

Susan Erno has worked in adult education as a volunteer tutor, tutor-trainer, ABE-GED teacher, practitioner-researcher, and teacher-trainer. She is currently regional adult education specialist for Planning District 10, and her continuing passion is to collect the stories of adult learners and teachers.

Diane Foucar-Szocki is currently Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Adult Education/Human Resources Development Program at James Madison University and Director of the Virginia Workforce Improvement Network. She is past president of the Virginia Association of Adult and Continuing Education. She earned her doctorate in Adult Education from Syracuse University and has worked with Adult Education in Virginia since 1989.

Suzanne Poore Grant has been an ESL professional (teacher, materials and curriculum developer, teacher-trainer, and administrator) in the US and abroad since 1974. She currently works at the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) as ESL Coordinator.

Nancy Hildebrandt has been an ESL-ABE practitioner for seventeen years, first in rural Minnesota and currently at the Virginia Beach Adult Learning Center where she teaches both day and evening classes. She was honored as the 1997 VAACE Outstanding Part-Time Adult Educator.

Mimi Stout Leonard established and continues to administer R.E.A.D., a literacy and English as a Second Language program serving employed adults in Galax, Virginia. She is President of the Virginia Rural Leadership Development Association, on the Galax-Carroll-Grayson Chamber of Commerce Board, a member of the Virginia Association of Biological Farmers, and an M.S. candidate at Radford University.

Greg Smith has been Executive Director of the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia since 1990. He lives with his wife and two children in Falls Church, Virginia. His daughter Kathryn was born while the rest of the team was on retreat, and she took her first steps as we concluded our work.

APPENDIX B
NEWS ARTICLES

Learning How We Learn: VAACE

Learning How We Learn
VAACE Assessment of the Virginia Staff Development System Project

Susan Erno
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902
804-972-4073

I have been thinking a lot lately about learning. As a regional specialist and member of the VAACE Assessment Team, I frequently observe, read about, and question others about their learning.

Last evening, I visited a class in a high school in rural Virginia. The room, as often is the case, was just an adult education class by night. The adult education materials were tightly packed together in a small corner and rose nearly to the ceiling. I found a dedicated teacher and three learners.

The first, a middle aged black man was eager to share his newly acquired mastery of reading. David (all names have been changed) reads every opportunity he gets-his son's story books, the bills he now pays, and even the words on the computer screen he passes at work each day. "I used to think that you had to be really smart to use a computer; now I think I might be able to do something with it." he observed. Jules, a young man of Puerto Rican descent, recently moved into the area from New York. He is studying for his GED and is challenged by the level of concentration needed to stay with the math problems he has chosen to do. Alexandro, originally from Mexico, has mastered spoken English and now wants to get his GED. Alexandro is eager to learn and pleased to find a program relatively close to his home. He had thought he would have to go to Texas to get his GED.

In addition to learning what they need to reach their educational goals, they are also learning each other's, stories, what's important to them, and how to work together. Grace, the teacher, searches for common threads in their learning needs and experiences to weave into meaningful lessons.

Pondering the experience while driving home, I thought about the diversity in this small rural class and the challenges Grace faces trying to serve each unique learner. There doesn't seem to be a "typical" adult education class anymore. As practitioners — teachers, aides, administrators, specialist, and volunteers; we must bring a huge reserve of energy, resources, and creativity to our work each day. How do we do it? How can adult educational professionals (both paid and unpaid) be supported in their own learning through professional development?

Given that, what can be said about our own learning preferences and needs? Perhaps we could say that it is important that learning be relevant, accessible, and timely. Our own learning must start with our questions and program needs. Our background, experience, and prior knowledge must be honored. We must have choices, be able to decide what we need to learn, and how we will learn it. Just as in a our diverse classes, a one size fits all professional development model is not likely to work well for us.

These are the kinds of questions that I think about as a member of the VAACE Assessment Team. Our charge is twofold — to find the many ways practitioners are learning and supporting each other and to suggest how the Virginia Staff Development System can continue to evolve to meet practitioners' needs. Not unlike the aforementioned rural class, practitioners bring a richness in their diversity, talents, and experience to this field.

For now, the VAACE Assessment Team has a lot of questions to ask and data to analyze. To date, we have interviewed practitioners at all three VAILL Conferences. Team members have visited all the staff development sites and interviewed project directors and staff. Recognizing that we are practitioners as well as researchers, the team members will also be including stories about our own learning. We plan to do some profiles and focus groups to explore the questions that arise out of the data. We will be looking for the common threads in the stories practitioners tell us about their work and learning. Preliminary findings will be shared with project directors, state staff, and other interested parties at the VAACE Conference in April 1997. With their feedback, we will write the final report.

If you would like to share your learning experiences, suggestions, and ideas about professional development, please contact any member of the team.

VAACE Assesment Team

Sarah Dilley
Henrico County Schools 804-261-5070

Susan Erno
Albemarle County Schools 804-972-4073

Diane Foucar-Szocki
DFS Associates, Harrisonburg 540-568-2932

Suzanne Poore Grant
Alington Education and Employment Program
703-358-4200

Nancy Hildebrandt
Virginia Beach Adult Learning Center
804-473-5091

Carole Inge
Southside Community College, Keysville
804-736-2085

Mimi Stout Lashlee
Virginian Farmland Company, Culpeper
540-236-4778

Greg Smith
Literacy Council of Northern Virginia
Falls Church 703-237-0866

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The Voice of VAACE
working to improve the practice of adult education, enhance the status of our profession, and advocate for lifelong learning and the adult learner
March 1997
Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education

VAACE Assessment of the Virginia Adult Education Staff Development System

Susan Erno, Project Director
Diane Foucar-Szocki, Lead Investigator

There is a famous experiment in which you are shown a picture and depending upon your focus, you see either an old wrinkled woman or a young attractive woman. When I am asked why VAACE members are evaluating the staff development system in which they participate, I think of that picture. As consumers of staff development, we experience it one way; as researchers, we gain another perspective. When we put the two images together, we understand the whole picture.

Last spring, through an open application process, we chose a group of VAACE members and practitioners with varying backgrounds and levels of experience with research and staff development to complete the VAACE Assessment Team. The team is both geographically and programmatically diverse. This makes for long discussions about the research process and a richer product because it will include so many perspectives. For a framework to begin, we drew on the history of staff development in Virginia and the strengths of previous research.

In 1991, Hannah Fingeret and Sue Cockley conducted an evaluation of Virginia's staff development efforts which resulted in *Teachers' Learning: An Evaluation of ABE Staff Development in Virginia*. Their project was designed to assess existing staff development mechanisms in order to provide a sense of direction for future development. While there were several recommendations, each stood on the overarching assumption that there be created "a commitment to developing a coherent shared philosophy of staff development in which respect for teachers' knowledge is a central tenet." (p. 77). Overall, Fingeret and Cockley recommended that Virginia create a staff development system reflecting the principles of an inquiry based model. In addition, specific recommendations and

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timelines to achieve this were outlined in the report.

As a result of *Teachers' Learning*, Virginia adult educators embarked on a journey moving from one view and delivery system of practitioner learning to another. A team of 30 practitioners was given the task of designing a staff development system to meet their needs. Such a change was recognized as significant, challenging, and time consuming. *Inquiry and Action* (1994) reported on the process undertaken by Virginia practitioners to create an inquiry-based staff development system and recommended specific changes. This process continues as the system evolves.

In 1996, the Virginia Adult Education Office again sought to evaluate its staff development system and awarded the 353 evaluation contract to VAACE in a partnership with Albemarle County Schools and DFS Associates. Our design for the evaluation is practitioner-centered and collaborative. Our methods of data collection include interviews, site visits, document analysis, and focus groups. Since we are geographically diverse, with team members from Fairfax to Keysville, from Galax to Virginia Beach, we use email, snail mail, and telephone calls to bridge communication challenges between meetings.

We hope that our findings and recommendations will serve as a platform for effective decision making and action for the Virginia Staff Development System as it moves into the 21st century. We will present a report of our experience as an assessement team at a Friday morning Conference workshop. Please join us.

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APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHICS

ROLE	TYPE OF PROGRAM	YRS. EXP. IN AD. ED.	AGE (DECADE)	GENDER	RACE	RURAL / URBAN
Volunteer	ESL	6	46-55	F	C	U
Teacher, Volunteer	ABE, ESL, Family Literacy	6 ½	56-65	F	C	U
Teacher	ESL	4 ½	36-45	F	C	U
Volunteer	Literacy	1	Over 66	F		U
Volunteer	Literacy	2 ½	Over 66	F	AA	U
Support Coordinator	Literacy	4	25-35	F	C	U
Volunteer	ESL, Literacy	20 +	56-65	F		U
Teacher	ABE, ESL, GED	16		F	C	U
Administrator	GED, EDP	9	50's	F	C	U
Teacher	ABE, GED, Homebound	1		F	C	U
Volunteer	Literacy	10		F	C	R
Regional Specialist	ABE, ESL, Family Literacy, Workplace	15	40's	F	C	R
Administrator/ Planner	ABE, ESL, GED, Literacy, Workplace	21	50's	M	C	R
Administrator	Literacy, Volunteer Program		40's	M	C	U
Regional Program Planner	ABE, GED, Workplace	18	40's	F		R
Teacher	ABE, GED	2 ½		F		R
Teacher	GED, Literacy	10	30's	F	C	R
Volunteer	Literacy	4 months		F		R
Teacher	ABE, ESL, GED, Corrections	20	50's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE, GED, Workplace	6	28-32	F	C	U
Regional Program Planner	ABE	23	40's	F	C	R, U
Teacher Aide	ABE, ESL, GED	5	30's	F	AA	U
Teacher	ABE, GED	9		F	C	R
Teacher	Workplace	2	50's	M	C	U
Volunteer	Literacy	1	30's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE	4	60's	M	AA	R
Teacher	ESL	15		F		U

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Teacher	ABE, GED, Corrections	25	60	M	C	R
Teacher	ABE, GED, Welfare Reform	6 +	30's	M	AA	U
Teacher	ABE, Literacy, Corrections	6	40's	M	AA	R
Teacher	ABE, GED	3	25-30	F	C	R
Teacher	Even Start	8	50's	F	C	R
Coordinator	ESL, EDP, EHS	11	50's	M	C	U
Teacher	ABE, GED, Workplace	3	46-55	F	C	U
Teacher/ Administrator/ Volunteer	Literacy	1.5	46-55	M	C	R
Regional Program Planner	ABE, GED	14	36-45	F	C	R
Teacher/ Coordinator	ABE, ESL, GED, Workplace	23	46-55	F	C	U
Administrator	EDP	13	40's	F	C	U
Teacher	ABE, GED, Workplace	12	46-55	F	C	R
Administrator	ABE, ESL, GED, EDP, Workplace, Family	18	46-55	M	AA	U
Administrator	ABE, ESL, GED, Workplace, Family	10+	56-65	M	AA	U
Teacher/ Volunteer	ESL	7	56-65	M	C	U
Volunteer	ESL, GED	3	66+	F	C	U
Volunteer	Literacy	1	36-45	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE, ESL	6	36-45	F	C	R
Staff Development Coordinator	CPD			F	C	
Secretary	CPD			F	C	
Staff Development Coordinator	CPD			M	C	
Staff Development Coordinator	CPD			F	C	
Director	CPD			F	C	
Director	Research Network			F	C	
Information Systems Specialist	Resource Center			M	C	
Field Services Coordinator	Resource Center			F	C	
Director	ESL VAILL			F	C	

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Director	SE VAILL			M	C	
Director	SW VAILL/Progress			F	C	
Teacher	Corrections	15+	30's	F		R
Administrator	Literacy	4 months	40's	F		R
Administrator	Literacy	1.5	40's	F		R
Administrator	Vocational & Adult Ed	33		M	C	R
Administrator	Vocational & Adult Ed	28		M	C	R
Teacher	GED, Corrections	1		F		U
Teacher	ESL	27	50's	M		
Coordinator	ESL	7	30's	F	CC	U
Teacher	ABE, ESL			F	C	U/R
Teacher	GED, Workplace, Corrections	2	40's	M	AA	U
Coordinator	Literacy	4	50's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE, GED, Literacy, Even Start	8	30's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE, Literacy	1	20's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE		30's	F	AA	R
Administrator	Literacy, ABE & ESL Volunteers	10	50's	F	C	R
Teacher/ Administrator	ABE, GED, Literacy	7	40's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE	4	40's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE, ESL, Workplace	6		F		U
Administrator/ Sub Teacher	ESL	6		F		U
Teacher	Title I Tutorial		50's	F	C	U
Teacher	ESL, TOEFL	5-6		F	C	U
Teacher	ABE	15	40's	F	C	U
Teacher/ Administrator	ABE, GED, Literacy, Workplace	7		M		R/U
Teacher	ESL	7		F	C	U
Site Manager	ESL, Literacy	3		F	C	U
Teacher	ESL	14		F	C	U
Teacher	ESL	7		F	C	U
Administrator	ESL	17		F	C	U
Director	Literacy	6	30's	M	C	U
Teacher	EDP, GED, Evening High School	10	30's	F	C	U

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Coordinator	Literacy, Workplace	2	30's	F	C	R
Teacher	ABE, ESL	17	40's	F	C	U
Regional Specialist	ABE, GED, ESL, Workplace	11	20's	F	C	R
Coordinator	ESL	6	40's	F	C	U
Regional Specialist	ABE, GED	10	40's	F	C	R
Director	DFS Associates	10	40's	F	C	U
Regional Specialist	ABE, GED, Workplace	10	50's	F	C	R
Director	DOE, ABE			M	C	U

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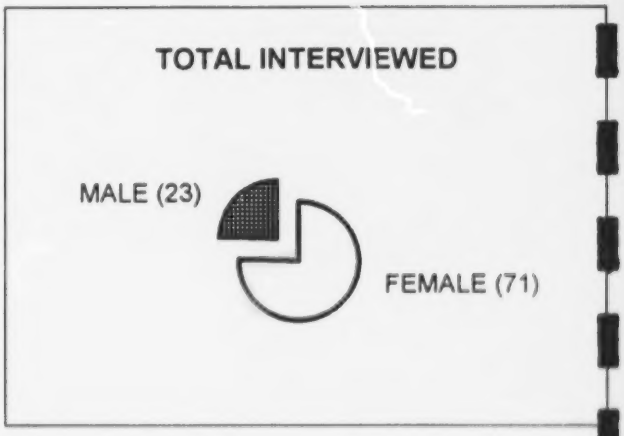
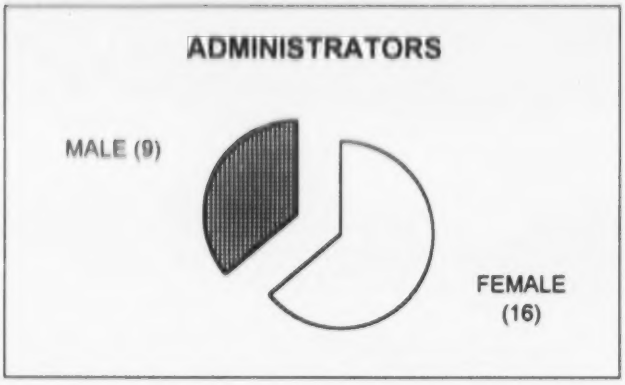
APPENDIX C
GRAPHS

TOTAL INTERVIEWED
BREAKDOWN BY OCCUPATION

44	Teachers
26	Administrators
4	Specialists
15	Literacy Providers
13	Professional Development Component Staff
102	TOTAL

[NOTE: In some instances, interviewees fell into multiple categories, e.g. volunteer/teacher, coordinator/literacy provider, teacher/administrator.]





[NOTE: Administrators include Regional Planners, Literacy Directors, Coordinators, and ABE and ESL Administrators.]

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APPENDIX D

Virginia association for adult & continuing education

Working to improve the practice of adult education, enhance the status of our profession, and advocate for lifelong learning

VAACE Staff Development Assessment Project, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, VA 22902
***Susan Erno**, Project Director* 804 972-4073
***Diane Foucar-Szocki**, Lead Investigator* 540 433-7484

October 8, 1996

Dr. Wayne Virag
Virginia State University
P. O. Box 9402
Petersburg, VA 23806

Dear Dr. Virag:

We were sorry that you were not able to join us for our assessment planning retreat at Camp Holiday Trails in Charlottesville. At that meeting the project team gained valuable insights and direction. Our goal is to provide a useful, quality assessment that will be of value to all involved. Enclosed, for your information, is a transcript of our meeting.

Building on our meeting, the project team further refined the focus of our study as: to assess the extent to which Virginia's Staff Development System (VSDS) is meeting the needs of practitioners in Virginia and the extent to which the system is inquiry-based. This focus will allow us to address many of the questions generated at our meeting including linkages, relationships and program improvement. In assessing the extent to which the system is inquiry-based we will consider primarily the features outlined in *Teacher's Learning* (Fingeret & Cockley, 1991) and *Inquiry and Action* (Drennon, 1994) including valuing teachers' knowledge, helping practitioners use what they know to continue learning, building learning communities, focusing on program improvement, recognizing the inter-relatedness of all aspects of adult education programming, and viewing staff development as a continuing process that involves teachers and administrators.

In October and November our research team members will be visiting each of the Staff Development project directors to talk with you further about your work. Sarah or Nancy will be calling to schedule a mutually agreeable meeting time. In preparation for this meeting we would ask that you gather any documents that would help us better understand your work with SE VAILL. We would particularly benefit from those documents which represent your relationship with the field including memos, typical correspondence, brochures, flyers, announcements, evaluations and surveys, calls for proposals, other publications, your 353 proposal, and a recent quarterly report.

Please feel free to contact Susan Erno, Project Director, or Diane Foucar-Szocki, Lead Investigator, with any questions, comments, concerns, or ideas.

We look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

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Sarah Dilley
Team Member

Nancy Hildebrandt
Team Member

Enclosure

Focus Group Protocol

2/11/97

Introduction. Thank you for taking time to talk with us today about your experiences with learning and staff development in adult education in Virginia. We will talk with one another for approximately an hour and a half. I will ask questions and will seek to hear everyone's views before moving on. Your varying perspectives are of extreme interest to us. The conversation here between and among us will provide us with additional information to strengthen services to adult educators in Viginia.

While we are tape recording this conversation, it will be heard only by our transcriptionist. The transcript will not use your real names. What you say will be read for the information it provides us about learning and staff development in Virginia adult education. Your input will be strictly confidential.

Are there any questions?

1. Let's begin with your names, how long you've been working in adult education and the work you do in adult educatuon.

2. Now, if you could, again begin with your name and tell us where you work, how long you've worked there, your current position and any other positions you've held there.

3. How do you learn about (get information regarding) staff development opportunities?
   What role do you play in giving (disseminating) information regarding staff development?

4. Have you ever done a learning plan?
   Tell us about your learning plan experience.

5. What experience have others in your program had with learning plans?
   How are learning plans implemented in your program? (mandatory/voluntary)
   What would you say their response has been
   Has their response changed over time? In what ways?

6. What kind of support do you receive for the learning plan process?
   What obstacles are there to learning plans?
   What kind of support would you like to receive?

7. Is there anything else you'd like to say about learning plans or the learning plan process?

8. What else do you do to support your own learning?
   What do others in your program do to support their learning?

9. What might staff development in Virginia do to better support your learning?

10. What experience have you had with..... the Resource Center.....The Centers for Professional

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Development.....the Research Network....Progress Newsletter.....VAILL's

11. In your program, how do you know when you are making progress?
How important is learning/staff development to program success?

12. Is there anything more you'd like to say about learning and staff development in Virginia?

Thank you our report will be available through the Resource Center in September.

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APPENDIX E

TO WHAT EXTENT IS VIRGINIA STAFF DEVELOPMENT INQUIRY BASED?

	PRACTITIONER KNOWLEDGE IS VALUED	PRACTITIONERS USE WHAT THEY KNOW TO CONTINUE LEARNING	BUILDS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS AS LEARNERS	FOCUS ON PROGRAM IMPORTANT	STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS A CONTINUING PROCESS
CPD					
Learning Plan					
Resource Center					
Research Network					
Progress					
VAILL					
ESL					
SW					
SE					

TO WHAT EXTENT IS STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN VIRGINIA MEETING THE NEEDS OF PRACTITIONERS?

	NETWORK OF SERVICES	INCENTIVES	VARIETY OF OPTIONS	ROLES WITHIN SD	INFORMATION - WHO GETS IT	SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR RISK TAKING
CPD						
Learning Plan						
Resource Center						
Research Network						
Progress						
VAILL						
ESL						
SW						
SE						

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
				Teacher's Learning		Inquiry & Action	Learning Plans		VAACE Assessment Project	

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